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JESS OF THE RIVER

BY
THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

AUTHOR OF "THE WASP," ETC.



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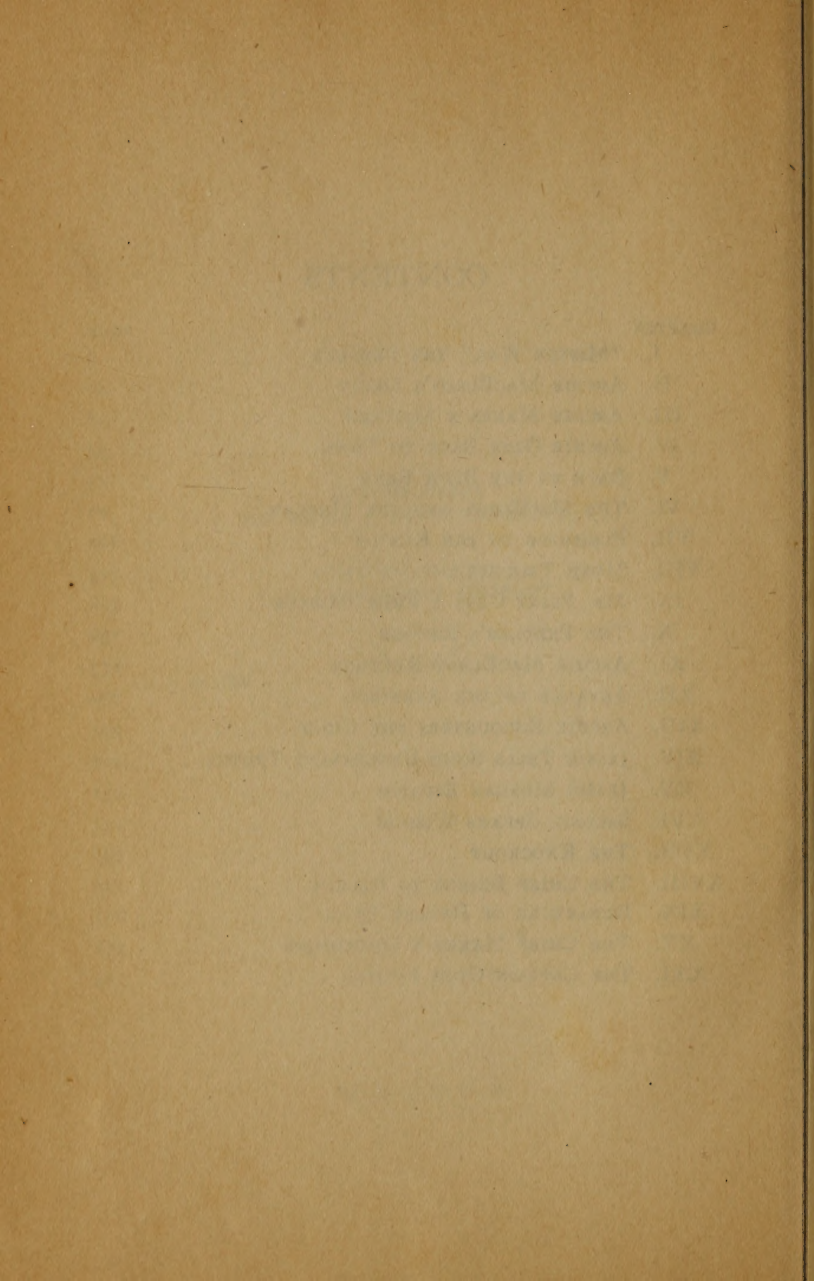
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Jess of the River

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. "MISTER WAS," THE PEDDLER	5
II. ARCHIE MACELROY'S DRIVE	22
III. ARCHIE MAKES A MISTAKE	38
IV. ARCHIE GETS BACK TO TOWN	57
V. BACK TO THE BLUE BEND	73
VI. THE MACELROY AND THE MORGAN	90
VII. FLEMMING TO THE RESCUE	106
VIII. MORE TROUBLE	123
IX. MR. FLINT GETS A FREE PASSAGE	138
X. THE PEDDLER'S RETURN	156
XI. ARCHIE MACELROY RETURNS	173
XII. ADVANCE OF THE AVENGERS	189
XIII. ARCHIE ENCOUNTERS THE CHIEF	203
XIV. JESSIE TELLS SOME UNPLEASANT TRUTHS	217
XV. JESSIE MORGAN ESCAPES	231
XVI. SACOBIE SPEAKS WISDOM	244
XVII. THE KNOCKOUT	259
XVIII. THE CHIEF BEGINS TO RELENT	273
XIX. DEPARTURE OF HEDLEY BEAN	287
XX. THE CHIEF MAKES A DISCLOSURE	301
XXI. THE CAPTAIN GOES FISHING	314



JESS OF THE RIVER

CHAPTER I

“MISTER WAS,” THE PEDDLER

SODDEN snow still lay knee-deep, hip-deep, in the more sheltered recesses of the big woods. All the rivers of the wilderness, great and small, were running high and cold and roily. Even in lakes and ponds the ice was gray and adrift. To this region of high and rocky uplands, high forests, and swift waters spring comes late.

Mr. Hedley Bean sat humped on the right-hand end of the single seat of a ramshackly “Concord” wagon, with his elbows on his knees and a rein in each mottled, hairy hand. A gray mare, possessed of very fine and noticeable hip-bones and ribs, a scraggy neck, a scornful under lip, and a “wall” eye, drew the wagon.

The road lay a hundred yards above the river at

this point, on the left side of the valley, with tall spruces and firs climbing up to the skyline on one side and down to the roaring river on the other. Mr. Bean's round, red-brown eyes looked out of his wrinkled, nut-brown face like the eyes of a cunning but courageous animal. The road (save the name!) climbed and dipped and climbed again, and now and then took a half-turn in itself. From the high spots the old peddler had a fine view of the country. He could see the wild valley of the river for a distance of several miles up and down, thousands of acres of black forests beyond the river, and on his own side of it the narrow ribbon of the road vanishing and reappearing, the smoke-blue dome of Beaver Head far away to the nor'west, a couple of crows in a treetop overhanging the river, and an eagle floating high up against the pale blue sky.

Mr. Bean's eyes always returned to the swollen river from their aimless inspections of hilltop and skyline. His business lay with the river just now, and he eyed it keenly. He looked for racing logs upon its brown and flashing surface—for the sign that MacElroy's "drive" of lumber was out of Blue

Bend River, or that Simpson's drive, from the main stream up beyond the mouth of the Blue Bend, was coming down. And yet his business was not with the lumber, but with the men who drove it, from the big woods where they had cut it, out and down to the empty booms on the lower St. John. For Mr. Bean was a peddler. He said so himself, and the government of the province had licensed him to that effect. His pack lay even now in the back of the wagon; but that he was something more than a carrier and purveyor of cheap watches, mouth-organs, tape, dress-goods, needles, and finger-rings, I shall soon show you.

The road was in bad shape. Culverts were flooded or broken, and at the bottom of every hollow the old mare slogged to her knees in mud and water. At last the peddler drew rein before a rail-fence, a small clearing which bristled with fire-scarred stumps and a small frame house. He did not get down from the wagon or so much as change his hunched position on the seat. He turned his head and looked intently at the house for fully a minute. Then he whistled shrilly.

The unpainted front door of the house opened

on the instant, and a man stepped out into the stumpy clearing. He was not the man who owned the house and clearing, and he was certainly not the person whom Bean had expected in answer to his whistle. But the peddler made no sign that all was not as he had expected. His face was expressionless, and it remained so. The round, red-brown eyes regarded the man as steadily and unconcernedly as they had regarded the closed door.

The man from the house advanced with a grin on his face. He was comfortably dressed and suggested something between a woodsman and a village storekeeper. He climbed heavily over the fence.

"Well, I guess I gotcher this time, Mister Was," he said, grinning wider than ever. "Yer sure Mister Was now if ye never was before."

Hedley Bean permitted himself a slight scowl. He objected to having his name trifled with. He always signed himself "H. Bean," and a facetious Englishman (to whom he had sold a watch that would not go) had named him "Old Has Been." A facetious stream-driver had shortened this to

"Mister Was," which had stuck. He didn't like it.

"What d'ye want?" he snarled.

"Maybe I want a yard of tape, or a paper of pins," replied the other. "Anyhow, I'll have a look at yer pack. Open it up!"

"I don't cal'late to open here," answered Bean calmly.

"Guess ye've forgot who I am," retorted the other. "William Flint, Scott Act Inspector *and* special constable. An' here's my card," he concluded, producing a search-warrant.

Mr. Bean climbed down from his seat, went around to the back of the wagon, and unbuckled the stout strap which encircled the pack.

"Tape, did ye say?" he queried, opening up the curiously constructed bag and sliding his right hand into one of the compartments.

"Don't trouble yerself to serve me, Mister Was," replied Flint. "I ain't above lookin' for what I want myself, in the pack of an honest peddler. I reckoned ye'd be up to meet the drives at the mouth of the Blue Bend, to supply the boys with the pins an' tape for which their souls is thirstin'. Jist gimme elbow-room, will ye? Step back!"

The peddler stepped back. He came so near to smiling that a few of the wrinkles of his brown face changed direction for a fraction of a second. He leaned his back against the fence and produced a clay pipe.

"Select what ye want, an' I'll tell ye the prices, inspector," he said, with dry insolence. "Don't forgit yer wife nor the little Flints. It ain't often ye git a chance like this to buy somethin' fine for the fambly. How'd one of them little gold watches at copper prices look a pinned onto Mis' Flint's front, the way they're wore by the ladies down to Woodstock?"

"Shut yer mouth!" exclaimed Flint, savagely. Mr. Bean lit his pipe and again almost smiled. Mr. Flint had not always been a Scott Act Inspector—and Bean had known him when he wasn't. The same might be said of Mrs. Flint. The inspector went through that pack like an editor of day-before-yesterday going through a manuscript in search of a split infinitive. The editor usually had better luck than the limb of the law, for Flint did not seem to be able to find what he was looking for. He made a terrible mess of the contents of

the pack. As he pulled the various articles forth he jumbled them together on the floor of the wagon, and some of them fell to the muddy road.

"What ye spoils ye pay for," remarked Mr. Bean pleasantly.

Mr. Flint swore and went on more violently than ever with his search. He opened and upturned boxes and packages, unrolled dress-goods, punched and prodded the pack itself, and finally turned it inside out. With a grunt of disgust he flung the empty pack into the road and gave his attention to the wagon. However, there was nothing in the wagon that could not be seen at a glance.

"Maybe ye'd like to cut the old mare open?" suggested Bean.

Flint turned on him in a towering passion, shaking a fist as big and red as a home-cured ham.

"Where've ye stowed it?" he yelled. "Where d'ye keep it?"

"Keep what?" asked the old man. "Ye said ye wanted tape an' pins, an' now ye've went an' chucked 'em into the mud."

"Rum's what I'm talkin' about, and well ye

know it, ye old fox!" cried Flint. "Whisky and gin is what I'm lookin' for."

"Then ye've come to the wrong place. Ye should have stayed home, where there's plenty of it—so I hear."

The constable laughed harshly and informed the other that though he, Bean, might fool the green-horns from the lower river, he wasn't cute enough to fool a clever and well-informed citizen like William Flint.

"Sure, I wouldn't try, Mr. Flint," replied the old man. "Ye'd smell it out with that there ed-dicated nose of yourn. Might as well try to hide a pa'tridge from Peter Jones's dog as hide a square-face from the likes of yerself. An' now will ye pick up them there dress-goods an' stow 'em away where ye found 'em?"

"I'll see ye in hell first!" exclaimed Flint savagely.

"Well, I guess I'll be unhitchin'," said Bean, with a sigh. "I'll stop the night with Jim Samson, if he'll put up a poor old peddler. An' maybe he'll help me pick up my stock-in-trade, seein' as

he ain't a gover'ment official like yerself, Mr. Flint."

He let down the bars in the fence and led the gray mare into the clearing. Mr. Flint remained in the road, gazing with sullen, baffled eyes at the empty pack in the mud. As the peddler rounded the end of the house, on his way to the log barn, he was confronted by the owner of the establishment. Bean, continuing to lead the mare toward the stable, looked at the proprietor with a masklike countenance and slowly closed one eye. Jim Samson smiled nervously.

"I couldn't warn ye, Mr. Bean," he whispered. "He kep' us all in the room with him, darn his hide, an' sot by the window himself an' kep' an eye out for ye. But I cal'lated as how he wouldn't find nothin'."

"Will ye fetch in the pack an' the stuff?" said Bean dryly. "Ye'll find 'em all hove round in the mud."

He took the mare out of the shafts and watered her at the well. He led her into a stall, unharnessed her, and fed her liberally from Jim Samson's scanty store of oats and hay. While he was

thus employed Samson returned to the barn-yard with the muddy pack and the articles which Flint had spilled onto the road. Samson was a weary and timid looking person and bore no physical resemblance to the gentleman of the same name who made so free with the pillars of a temple. His shoulders were narrow, his legs and arms thin, his feet and hands large, and his face vague and apologetic. He lived largely on buckwheat pancakes—and there is not much material for red blood in buckwheat. He feared both Flint and Bean; but as he owed the peddler some money, and was associated with him in business in a humble capacity, he feared him more than the other. Now he gathered together and sorted the goods in the bottom of the wagon, lifted the pack into the wagon, and restored everything to its place. The peddler watched him from the stable door.

“Ye might pull the strap tighter,” said the peddler. He drew a gold watch from a pocket of his shabby vest and looked at it. “When’ll supper be ready, an’ whatcher got to eat?” he asked.

“’Bout an hour from now, I reckon, Mr. Bean.

Jane'll mix up some riz biscuits, an' we got aigs in plenty, an' pork," replied Samson.

"Sounds hearty. You'd ought to eat more eggs yerself, Jim," said the peddler. And then: "Here comes Flint," he added, in a lower voice.

Flint came around the end of the house. He approached heavily, halted, and scowled at Bean. Bean returned the scrutiny indifferently with his still, red-brown eyes. Flint's eyes were blue and bulging.

"I'll be stoppin all night, Jim," said the constable.

Samson shot an anxious and questioning glance at the peddler and cleared his throat nervously. The peddler turned to him and said, "I'm stoppin', too, Jim. I figger on meetin' the drive at the mouth o' the Blue Bend to-morrow mornin', to sell the boys some fancy pipes an' mouth-organs an' suspenders before they git down to Mr. Flint's town an' spend all their money on strong drink. It's a caution what a terrible town that is for hard liquor, an' Mr. Flint livin' right there."

The constable snarled and walked away. He entered the house by the kitchen door. Jim Sam-

son looked at the peddler with a flicker of admiration on his meaningless, weary face.

"Yer a cool hand, Mr. Bean," he said. "Ye ain't scart of nobody."

"Yer wrong there, Jim," replied the peddler. "There's one man in the world kin scare me, an' he don't live no great ways from here. Old Archie Morgan's the man—Chief Morgan. I seen him mad once, Jim—an' 'twas me he was mad at. His whiskers stood out like a wind was blowin' through them, an' his eyes was green flames, an' I reckon he would hev killed me with his fingers if I hadn't got out the window. An' it was all because I'd give a bottle of whisky to one of his darned Injuns."

"But ye ain't scart of Flint—an' him an inspector," said Samson.

"Inspector!" retorted Bean. "Aye, an' run a blind tiger himself before he got the job. Ten like Bill Flint couldn't scare me none."

"But he'll sp'ile this trip for ye, Mr. Bean. Leastwise, it looks like it to me. He cal'lates to stick right to ye, like a kink in a sow's tail," said Samson anxiously.

The old peddler glanced at the settler with something like interest in the mahogany depths of his eyes.

"If ye're tryin' to be funny, Jim, ye'd best quit it or maybe ye'll strain somethin'," he said. "Ye ain't got the brain to stand it, Jim."

"Who—me?" returned Samson, in frank bewilderment. "Funny, Mr. Bean? I never was that in all my life—except unintentional. What d'ye mean?"

"I believe ye, Jim. Well, never mind that. I ain't expectin' to lose this trip, so don't ye fret. Ye got a sniff of him, I guess? He's got a square-face in his overcoat pocket an' a flask on his hip. He'll be drunk to-night, Jim, an' like a b'ar with a sore head to-morrow. By the way, tell Mis' Samson to hev coffee for supper—will ye? Coffee allus sharpens my wits."

The peddler's suspicions were confirmed at the supper table. Mr. Flint rocked in his chair; his bulging eyes were moist; his laughter was wild and vague. The Samson children watched him with astonishment and delight, thinking him a much more entertaining person than their father or the

old peddler. His attentions to the careworn Mrs. Samson were swooping, waveringly gallant. In trying to pass her a plate of hot biscuits he let the plate fall and split upon the top of the coffee pot. In leaning across the table to address Mr. Bean, he rested his elbow upon the fried egg that had just been served to him. But he had reached the happy stage, and an egg more or less on his elbow did not matter. Flint passed his cup twice for coffee, and he emptied it both times, and told the peddler that he was very fond of him—in an unofficial capacity.

After supper, in the kitchen, Mr. Flint produced his flask openly and passed it around. Even Mrs. Samson took a sip of the stuff, for the inspector's spirit of hospitality was aggressive. Then he emptied it down his own throat, waved it around his head, and let it fly, with the intention of depositing it outside, by way of the window. Instead of going through the window, the flask hit Jim Samson in the spot where the lower buttons of his vest should have been. Then, with his face wreathed in smiles, Mr. Flint slid from his chair to the floor.

"I never see liquor lay a man flat so quick before," said Jim.

"He's bin at it all day," replied the peddler. "Now we'll put 'im to bed. Git a holt of his shoulders, an' I'll fetch his feet along."

So they carried Mr. Flint to the bed in a stuffy room upstairs, deposited him on the straw tick, and removed his boots and his collar.

"Now we'll set about our business," said the peddler. "He's safe there till mornin'. Ye kin go an' hitch up the mare, Jim."

"But maybe we won't meet up with the drive afore mornin'," said Samson nervously. "I ain't seen a stick come down yet."

"Don't ye worry," retorted Bean. "He'll not bother us if we take all night and all day about our business. All ye've got to do is obey."

Mrs. Samson stopped the peddler at the kitchen door.

"I'm scart to be left alone with him," she whispered in a thin voice.

"Ye needn't be," replied the peddler. "He won't move a finger before to-morrow afternoon. We'll be back before he wakes up."

"But I'm afraid as how maybe he won't wake up at all," she said.

The peddler turned full upon her, thrust his face close to hers, and glared at her with his red-brown eyes. She drew back quickly.

"Now, what d'ye mean by that, Jane Samson?" he asked menacingly.

"Oh, nothin', Mr. Bean; nothin'," replied the woman, trembling.

"The man's drunk," said Bean; "an' there was never a man so drunk yet that he didn't wake up after a while to cuss himself an' the liquor. Drunk—d'ye hear? Ye might open his window in an hour or two; an' to-morrow ye kin pour some cold water onto his ugly face, if yer so minded. Here's five dollars for yerself."

Bean and Samson drove a slow mile along the road. Then the peddler got down, fussed about on the left side of the dark road for a minute, then slipped into the underbrush. Samson dismounted from the seat and stood at the mare's head, puffing nervously at his pipe. Fifteen minutes later the peddler appeared at the tail of the wagon. Samson joined him, and together they

lifted a large and heavy wooden case into the wagon. Again Bean vanished. Again he returned, and another case was lifted into the wagon. Twenty minutes later a third case was added to these. The peddler was breathing heavily by this time. He mounted to the seat without a word and clucked to the mare. Samson walked behind. Two miles further on they halted again, fed the mare, built a small fire, and rested for a couple of hours.

CHAPTER II

ARCHIE MACELROY'S DRIVE

Mr. Archie MacElroy had been in the woods on the Blue Bend since October, and now it was the first week of May. He was twenty-four years of age, stood five feet and ten inches in his socks, was sturdily set up, but lean. He was not startlingly handsome; but his face was honest and strong, and his dark-gray eyes were fine. When keenly interested in anything his whole countenance lighted up, but at other times he wore an expression of reflective gravity which seemed out of tone with his youth. The fact is, he had a good deal to think about outside his work for the big firm of Marsh and West.

Of immediate family he had only a father, though he had heard of relatives still living in Scotland. Only a father—but such a father! To begin with, he had to support this only parent; and Captain Ian MacElroy, late of the *Black Watch*,

required a great deal of support. To cap this awkward situation, he thought he was in love with the daughter of John West, the junior partner of the firm for which he worked. Young MacElroy's knowledge of his father's earlier life was as vague as it was unpleasant. He had heard a little of it from his mother before her death, and fragments of it from his father of late years, when that dashing gentleman was in his cups.

His mother, an English girl, had been engaged to a cousin of his father's. Shortly before the intended marriage the captain had come along, dashing, young, fresh, and heroic, from some little war in which he had distinguished himself by brainless courage. The captain's eyes were still notable. In his youth they had been irresistible. He sang in a melting tenor, and also he was an expert performer on the flute. With his melting eyes and voice, his little bronze cross inscribed with those two immortal words, "For Valor," and heroic wounds but newly healed, he came at the eleventh hour, and won the beautiful young girl away from his older and less romantic relative. (Archie had never been able to learn the identity of the man

whom his mother had jilted.) They had made a runaway match of it.

Family and public opinion had been so strongly against the romantic captain and his unstable bride that he had resigned his commission. They had come to Canada, a land of hope, great dreams and astonishing changes in conditions then as now. The captain brought a large sum of money with him to the land of opportunity, which had been contributed by a fond but humiliated father for the purchasing of thousands of acres of forest land or the establishment of some big and dignified business, such as shipbuilding. But the captain had found pleasanter ways of investing his money than in timber in any form.

In St. John and the little town seventy miles up the river he had discovered a gay though isolated society, a rollicking people of his own kidney—English officers and their wives and hard-riding, well-bred Colonial Tories. So it was when Captain Ian MacElroy first arrived in New Brunswick with his charming bride; but now the sons of that breed are overridden and the echoes of that life are dead.

The captain bought himself a town house, and horses, and wines of rare vintage for his cellar. He gave the finest dinner parties in the Province. Hoop-la! There was more money where that had come from. But, after all, there wasn't a great deal more. The disillusioned bride, by this time a mother, learned that she had married a brainless, and sometimes vicious, sot. But he continued to sing and play on the flute to perfection.

The first child died. So did the second. Then the third came, at a time of sordid want suddenly relieved by a check in a letter from home—a check drawn to Mrs. MacElroy's order. He was a sturdy boy—sturdy enough to weather the storms of that blundering life—the seasons of poverty and the times of revel. The bold captain was in no condition to go to church on the day of the christening; so the mother had her own way and the baby was named Archibald.

The mother, worn out and broken with the struggle, had died when Archie was fifteen. A little more money came from somewhere, and Archie continued at school. The captain would not work.

He could not work. He was not worth his salt, except as a tootler on a flute.

But Archie had scrambled half way through college before a lasting cessation of funds from "home" forced him away from his studies and reasonable ambitions. He was given a clerkship in the offices of Marsh & West, a firm of wholesale grocers, mill suppliers, and lumbermen. Archie did his office work thoroughly, but it was the lumbering side of the firm's business that attracted him.

The partners knew his father, the worthless and penniless captain; so as there was need of money, and as he knew something of forestry, they sent him up into the wilds of Quebec to inspect a tract of timber which they contemplated buying. Archie reported favorably on the timber; it was purchased, and proved a good investment.

After that he met Laura West, who had been studying music in Germany; and, in spite of himself, he had fallen in love with the slender, calm-eyed, gracious girl. These two met frequently in the little city and became very good friends. Archie could see that she liked him. He did all that

he could to keep from her a knowledge of the quality of his own affections. He flattered himself that he succeeded in this. To escape a long and trying winter of temptation—a winter during which he would meet Laura at a dozen or more dances, and dance with her perhaps two dozen times—he asked the firm for another mission to the woods. He was put in charge of their operations on Blue Bend River.

Archie MacElroy had been in the Blue Bend country all winter, generally superintending three camps and three crews. He had done well, despite his anxieties about his father and his foolish love affair. The total cut of the three camps exceeded expectations by something about one hundred thousand superficial feet of lumber. He had been fortunate enough to get every log of his cut to the "brows" before the bottoms had fallen out of the logging roads. Now every log was in the stream, and the leaders were approaching the mouth of the Blue Bend, though the straggling tail was still above the Indian reservation.

Clear of the Blue Bend, the logs would have to be driven one hundred miles down the large river

before they reached the booms. In the booms they would be sorted and rafted. Now he scented trouble ahead. The Simpson Lumber Company was bringing a big drive down the main river, from above the mouth of the Blue Bend; and should these two drives and two crews meet and mingle there would be ructions. The mixings of the logs would be no great matter in itself, as they were bound for the same booms, with many lesser drives, and would have to be sorted, anyway. The boom company was sure to take its toll of them, whether they went down by themselves or mixed with half a dozen other marks. The danger lay with the crews. The drives were racing. There was a spirit of rough contest in the air, and Mac-Elroy had overheard enough to know that his men expected liquid reënforcements at the mouth of the Blue Bend. Should the drives meet and the liquor arrive, there would be loss of blood as well as loss of time.

The boss had been moving with the middle of the drive, where men and logs were thickest; but now he forced his way through and ahead of the press at top speed, sometimes riding a big log in

midstream, at others running along the bank. A few miles above the Indian reservation, which was situated ten miles from the mouth of the river, he overtook the three bateaux carrying the cook and his staff, the outfits of the men and the provisions, and got aboard the leading boat.

It was now mid-afternoon—mid-afternoon of the day of Hedley Bean's arrival at Jim Samson's clearing on the main river a few miles below the mouth of the Blue Bend. The brown, froth-clotted breast of the stream was thinly sprinkled with logs. The bateaux ran faster than the logs, even without the advantage of the assistance of the steersmen's long sweeps, owing to their superior shape and weight. The oars were manned in the leading bateaux. Archie MacElroy took his place in the sharp bows; and as the big boat swung around a bend he saw that the logs were jamming half a mile below in front of the reservation. He had sent two men ahead the day before to keep his place clear; but it was now quite evident that they had neglected to attend to their job. He saw several men and a dozen women on the bank idly watching the swiftly forming jam.

A stitch in time saves nine, we all know; and a couple of logs moved in time out of an eddy may save days of labor and vexation, many sticks of dynamite, hundreds of feet of good timber—even limb and life. MacElroy uttered a cry of anger and disgust.

“Why do they stand there and gawk at it?” he exclaimed. “Two old women could clear it now without danger; but it’ll be a nasty mess in ten minutes. Why don’t they get busy? And where are the boys I sent down yesterday?”

“Derned queer thing,” said the steersman. “Where’s old Chief Morgan, I’d like to know? I was drivin’ on this river three years ago, sir, an’ some logs got cotched in that identical spot afore daylight; but long afore we sighted it, or knowed anything about it, the chief he spied it out from his big house up yonder an’ went out with three of his Injuns an’ picked it clear in no time. Queer thing he ain’t clearin’ it this minute; for there he is on the bank a lookin’ on as cool an’ unconcerned as a cowcumber, dern his whiskers.”

Archie turned to the rowers and told them to put their backs into the stroke. He shifted a case

of tinned goods that hampered the man in the bow. The heavy boat was boiling along now at racing speed.

"We'll bust the jam, boys," he said, "and then we'll have a talk to the men I sent down yesterday and to this half-baked old fellow you call Chief Morgan."

The man rowing stroke-oar winked at the man with the stern-sweep. Knowing the two who had been sent down to keep this danger spot clear, they made a shrewd guess as to why they had not stood by their job. In fact, it was more than a guess. They knew that Job Smith and Amos Bigg had gone farther down, to keep a date with Mister Was at the mouth of the river, as representatives of all the thirsty lads of the crew. But the boss suspected nothing of all this.

"Look there!" he cried. "Some one has jumped out on the logs with a peevy. It's a woman, by thunder! And there goes the old fellow with the whiskers after her, and the whole push after the old man."

"He ain't went to help her, though," said the man in the stern. "He's tryin' to fetch her back.

Queer old cuss as ever was, Chief Morgan!" He was right; but the daring woman with the peevy seemed to be in no mind to go back. She was out on a solid criss-cross of jammed logs, now pecking uselessly but well-meaningly at the timber, now turning and fending off the tall old man in a masterly manner with her peevy.

"She's young—an' she ain't a squaw," said the far-sighted man in the stern. "Maybe she's one o' them swell visitors the chief has up to his place every now an' agin—folks from England an' the likes of that."

"She's a brick, whoever she is," said Archie MacElroy.

Half a minute later they ran the boat into shallow water, among the flooded bushes on the shore, snubbed her headlong course, and jumped over the shoreward gunnel hip-deep into the stream. They pulled her ashore, snatched up their peevies, and Archie and two of the men raced for the jam, leaving the bow-oar to mind the boat. They ran out on the blocked logs without paying any attention to the stolid, inactive Maliseets clustered at the edge of the river.

The woman and Morgan were still on the jam, engaged in a remarkable combat. The gigantic old man was trying to capture the lithe and venturesome young woman, who foiled his attempts with the steel spike of her cant-dog. Archie saw, at a glance, that she was young, white, and of the outside, civilized world. Her dark eyes were flashing now with scorn and anger, her cheeks were flaming and her plentiful brown hair was falling in loops and strands about her graceful shoulders. The old man was also in a fine flare of temper. He was strong and active, but he respected the threatening spike of the peevy. He sprang from side to side in front of her, scolding her in biting terms and imploring her to see reason and return to safety in one breath.

Archie MacElroy ignored Chief Morgan—whom he had never met before, but against whom he now entertained feelings of the liveliest displeasure—and lifted his weather-stained soft felt hat to the girl.

“Thank you very much for helping us,” he said, gazing eagerly into her flushed face. “We can manage it now, I think. It was kind of you, and

wonderfully plucky. Bad place for a jam. Now you must go ashore, please. This way, boys! Here's the key. Steady does it."

But Watson, the man who had steered the bateau, knew more about the interior economy of a jam of logs than the boss. He had already found the true key of the tangle within ten yards of the bank, and, without waiting for gallantries or a word of command, had called his companion's attention to it with a jerk of the thumb and set cleverly to work. It was still a small jam. It had not had time or weight enough to settle and knit. It trembled suddenly from the core outward. A couple of big sticks came up from the depths, released by the removal of pressure from above.

The young woman dropped her peevy and fled toward the shore. The old man grabbed at her, but she had not forgotten her anger and swerved nimbly out of his reach. He doubled on her track, grabbed at her again, and in his anxiety to get her in his arms and carry her ashore he missed his footing and fell. He was up again in a moment. Then the jam lifted, plunged and began to spread. With a few violent, spasmodic movements it fell

to pieces from flank to flank, from front to rear.

It was no great matter. The two stream-drivers went calmly ashore across the running timber with their peevies on their shoulders. Chief Morgan, shaken and bewildered by his fall, scrambled to safety before he realized what he was doing. The venturesome young woman, who knew nothing of the art of "cuffing" running logs, toppled into the yellow flood in a place where the released logs were running thin.

The boss of the drive balanced himself on a big and steady pine long enough to kick off his heavy, spiked boots, then plunged after her. He was a strong swimmer. He found her before she could come to the surface, took a firm grip of her with his left hand, and ascended slowly with his right arm held high for protection. His exploring hand encountered the bark of a racing log. He knew that he was in fairly clear water, in the tail of the broken jam. He came cautiously to the surface close beside the log, cleared his eyes, saw that he was out of the crush, threw his right arm over the log, and brought the girl's head to the sur-

face. She gasped and spluttered and opened her eyes.

"Sorry," he gasped, looking at her with a smile. As you may imagine, their faces were very near together. "All the fault of my men. They should have given us warning. We'll land somewhere near that cedar, I guess."

The girl smiled wanly and spluttered some more. Then she got one of her own hands on the log and looked toward the shore. She was beautiful, though her hair was wet as water weeds and plastered about her face. This fact did not escape the notice of the son of Captain Ian MacElroy, you may be sure. He looked at her with frank admiration and forgot the chilly temperature of the water through which they were drifting on the tail of the log.

"You saved my life," said the girl.

"And you tried to clear my logs for me."

"Uncle Archie let them jam. He doesn't like you for some reason or other. My name is Jessie Morgan."

"Doesn't like me? I don't know him. Hold

on to the log with both hands, Miss Morgan. I must head it in toward the shore."

"Uncle Archie will be there to meet us. We had a terrible fight."

"Is he really your uncle?"

"No, he is really father's second cousin once removed, or something like that."

"Here we are," said Archie, "and your uncle wading in for us. But let me carry you ashore, Miss Morgan——"

"Jessie. You saved my life, you know."

"Whatever you say, Jessie."

CHAPTER III

ARCHIE MAKES A MISTAKE

They stood dripping on the shore, confronted by the old man. Miss Morgan laughed, but the chief was still white with anger and consternation, and at the same time almost beside himself with relief. Archie MacElroy felt decidedly foolish. He glanced at the girl beside him, whose wet and loosened hair and soaking garments clung about her bright face and slender form with a woodland, classic grace that was bewildering. He thought of Laura West; and it flashed into his mind, with a pang at once bitter and sweet, that he had never enjoyed a waltz with Laura as he had this drift down the ice-cold river at the tail of a log.

"Up to the house with you, Jessie, and change every stitch immediately!" cried Chief Morgan. "This is what comes of disobeying me and defying me and mixing in other people's business. You

were lucky not to be drowned. You'll be lucky if you don't catch your death of cold. I shall tell your poor mother everything, you may be sure."

"It wasn't luck that I wasn't drowned," retorted the girl, "and I think you show very bad manners to say that it was. Mr. MacElroy saved my life. Oh, you needn't glare at us! He did—and at the risk of his own. Now I must run, Mr. MacElroy. You'll call, won't you?"

And she turned and sped away toward the big house on the wooded hill behind and below the log shacks of the Indian reservation.

"I must thank you from my heart for saving that wilful young woman from the natural result of her folly," said Morgan, glaring at Archie with hot blue eyes. "Come over to Noel Sacobie's house and I'll get you an outfit of dry clothes; and I'll pay you five hundred dollars for the rescue you accomplished so cleverly."

At that fire leaped into young MacElroy's eyes to match the fire in the other's. His face whitened and his jaws hardened. He trembled.

"Confound you!" he exclaimed in a choking

voice. "What d'you take me for? If you were a younger man I'd thrash you for this."

Morgan smiled ironically. His snow-white whiskers stood out from his keen, fierce face as if blown by a strong wind.

"Very pretty," he said, "but poor business. Five hundred dollars, young man. A tidy sum. Five hundred dollars—and the incident closed."

"You tempt me to forget your age," retorted MacElroy savagely. "How have I given you any right to insult me in this manner? For whom do you take me?"

"For whom do I take you? For the son of your father," said Morgan.

The young man winced and flushed, and retreated a pace as if he had been struck in the face. He stared at the old man without a word. The chief laughed dryly and combed his beard with long, brown fingers.

"That heroic parent of yours is more notorious than you imagine," he said. "I keep in touch with the outside world, young man."

"But he lives quietly enough now. What do you know of him?"

"I've heard of him. I've heard enough to know that he will not refuse the reward I've just offered you for saving Miss Morgan's life. I hear that he still cuts a distinguished figure in the little back-water where you live. An honorary member of the officers' mess of the place, I believe. Well, he can pay his mess bill, send to London for some new clothes, and buy himself a new flute. He still tootles on the flute, I suppose, and still sings that early Victorian classic, 'There was a rich merchant in London did dwell.' "

"Who are you?" cried Archie, eyeing the old man in blank astonishment and forgetting his anger for a moment.

"Archibald Morgan is my name," replied the chief calmly. "For the rest I'm a private gentleman, a land-owner, and a sort of honorary chief of the Maliseets. But I have not always lived on Blue Bend River."

"But what do you know about my father? Morgan?—I've never heard him mention the name."

"Very likely not. I know nothing good about him, I assure you."

"Even so, I do not see that his reputation is any

concern of yours," replied MacElroy, turning and walking up-stream toward his boat.

"Then I'm to understand that this incident is closed, young man?" Chief Morgan called after him. "I warn you not to come to my house or even set a foot on my land. D'ye understand? Turn round and answer me."

Archie turned. "No, I don't!" he cried. "Go to the devil!"

The boss waited in front of the Indian reservation until more men came up, then posted three of them to keep the spot clear and continued on his voyage down stream. While awaiting reinforcements he had changed his wet clothes for an outfit of dry ones from a dunnage bag in the boat. With the boat running free in mid-channel, he stood and looked back toward the big house of the strange and uncivil old man known to the people of the wilderness as Chief Morgan. Between the pointed tops of the spruces he could see a wide gable and two upper windows. Some one opened one of these windows and waved something white.

Archie had lost his own head-gear in the river during the rescue; but now he snatched the hat

from the head of the man at the bow-oar and waved it vigorously in reply to the waving from the window. Old Morgan saw this and guessed the cause of it, though even the upper windows of the house were out of his sight from where he stood on the sodden bank among the alder bushes and the faithful Maliseets. His voice roared across the water after the fast receding bateau.

"I see you!" he bellowed. "Stop it, d'ye hear, you young cad?"

But Archie continued to swing the bow-oar's hat around his head, and the person in the window continued to flap the sheet, or whatever it was, until the boat rounded a sharp bend in the river. Then Archie returned the hat to the rower's head and sat down.

"Chief Morgan don't seem extry obliged to ye for pickin' the young lady out of the drink," remarked the steersman. "Queer old cuss as ever I see, an' that's a fact; but I never knowed him to act so ugly before as he acted to-day. The sight of you seemed to set him b'ilin', sir."

"It seemed to," replied Archie shortly. "Well, I can stand it."

They reached the mouth of the river an hour later, without having seen anything of Job Smith and Amos Bigg on the way. They ran the boat ashore within twenty yards of the swifter, deeper current of the big river. Two men went into the woods with their axes; provisions and blankets were unpacked and a huge fire was built. The logs were running thick and fast by this time, rounding into the big river and slipping out of sight. The other bateaux arrived and unloaded.

Men reached the camp on foot, with their peevies and pike-poles on their shoulders, singly, in couples, in groups of three and four. Some of them appeared spectacularly on the backs of twirling, wallowing logs. Dusk thickened over the wilderness. Odors of boiling coffee, baking biscuits, and pork-and-beans floated on the chilly air. By eight o'clock every man of the crew was in camp, with the exceptions of Smith and Bigg, and the tail of Marsh & West's drive was in a fair way of getting clear of the Blue Bend before morning. After supper the big tarpaulins were spread on the ground near the fires and the men rolled themselves up in their blankets. It was a clear, cold

night. The boss sat up until eleven o'clock. Then he went the rounds of the sleeping camp. All was quiet and in order, save for the absence of Job Smith and Amos Bigg.

It was broad day when the cook awakened Archie MacElroy. Archie sat up with a start, rubbed his eyes, looked at the sky, and then at his watch. It was seven o'clock. He glanced around him. The cook and one member of his staff were at work about the fires, and half a dozen of the gang were down at the edge of the river washing their faces. Two men were chopping wood for the fires. All the others were asleep, some with their blankets over them, others sprawled about on the wet ground, yards away from the tarpaulins and their blankets. And it was seven o'clock, and six o'clock was the breakfast hour!

Archie sprang to his feet and strode over to the nearest sleeper. The fellow lay flat on his back, with his mouth wide open, and a reek of cheap whisky ascended from him. Then Archie knew that old Hedley Bean had fooled him—that the liquor had got into camp during the early hours of the morning. He left the heavy sleeper and

went over to the cooks. McGowen, the chief cook of the outfit, was sober as a judge, but his assistants looked red-eyed and weary.

"Hurry up with the grub, boys," said Archie. "I'll have these lads awake and ready for it, or you can call me a Dutchman. Pass me that bucket, Pat."

With the empty bucket on his arm he went down and spoke to the men at the edge of the river. Three of them had not touched the liquor, and the other three had evidently indulged in moderation.

"Boys, I'm not asking you any questions," he said. "Hedley Bean has turned the trick on me, after all, just as Pat McGowen and several others of you told me he would. I don't know the old pirate by sight, so will you tell me what he looks like? That's not asking much of you."

One of the men gave a brief but striking description of the old peddler. MacElroy thanked him.

"Simpson's drive's gittin' pretty handy, I guess," said one of the total abstainers. "His logs is passin' the mouth an' comin' thicker every minute. If old Was connects with them, too, we'll be havin' a rough house hereabouts before long."

Archie nodded, left his bucket beside the water, and made the rounds of the sleepers. As he expected, he found that Job Smith and Amos Bigg had rejoined the crew. He returned to the edge of the river and filled the bucket. Then he walked over to the nearest slumberer and poured ten quarts of icy water full in the upturned face. The fellow sat up, spluttering and cursing. The sober men beside the stream, the two chopping wood at the top of the bank, and the cooks at the fires all roared with delight. It was a joke of a variety suited to their rugged ideas of humor. Several of them volunteered their services in the worthy cause and speedily armed themselves with buckets. Then followed a busy half hour, during which Archie MacElroy and his helpers carried and poured water as if for a fire; Pat McGowen laughed so hard that he forgot his biscuits and let two panfuls burn to a cinder, and men awoke suddenly, at first dizzy with fright in the belief that they had fallen into the river, then fighting mad, sullen, or ashamed, as their natures prompted.

The uproar was soon stilled. Those who

showed fight were faced briskly by the boss himself. Out of the whole crew only a dozen did justice to the belated breakfast. Archie and the twelve fit men started upstream to "sack" any logs that may have stranded along the shores during the night, leaving the main and unfit body in the charge of Bob Evans, a foreman of the drive and the boss of one of the lumber camps, with orders to break camp and start the boats and the men down the main stream within the hour.

It must be admitted that Mr. Bob Evans had taken a little in the small hours of the morning, but no more than enough to dull the edge of his appetite and sharpen the edge of his tongue. He was not a big man, but he was a good one. He was all ribs and under jaw, like a bulldog. Figuratively speaking, when he once took hold of a thing he held on until his teeth went through. So he broke that demoralized camp and started it moving down the big river. Every man had to get to his feet and hump himself. Cook-ovens, outfits, and provisions were packed and stowed away in the boats, and the boats were manned and launched upon the swift water. The gang, a dis-

consolate company, straggled along the rough shores with their peevies on their shoulders.

The boss and his squad did not find much to do upstream and returned to the mouth of the Blue Bend half an hour after the departure of Bob Evans and the main party. They rounded the point and followed down the St. John with the last stick of the tail of the drive shooting ahead of them down the torn waters. Abreast of them and behind them were logs, not of their cutting, running thick and fast, and Simpson's men were even with them, working on both sides of the stream. The men from up the main river seemed to be in good working order; and Archie congratulated himself on the facts that the two crews had not met the night before at the mouth of the Blue Bend, and that the whisky peddler had failed to connect with Simpson's men. Deep was his resentment against old Hedley Bean, though the result of his sly knavery had not yet amounted to anything more serious than a brief delay. But the old peddler had outwitted him.

Archie espied Mr. John Currie, the boss of Simpson's drive, peevy on shoulder and calked

boots on feet. Currie was a good type of woodsman and riverman, and something of a joker. Archie had met him before on the river. He hailed him now, and they walked along the rough shore together, talking, watching their men, and halting frequently to free a log from an eddy. Archie told the boss of the other drive of how old Bean had fooled him, and of the condition of his crew at seven in the morning. Currie laughed heartily.

"What d'ye expect?" he returned. "I'm an old hand, but Mister Was works the game on me every spring, sooner or later, and often enough in the winter and fall. He'll do it again before I'm much older. The boys are in with the old pirate, ye know—hand and foot."

"I'll lay the old sinner by the heels yet," said Archie grimly.

"Wish ye would, but I doubt it," replied Currie. "The old fox has never been caught nappin' yet. He never totes the liquor into camp himself, but always lets one or two of the crew do that. An' he's never yet been caught by an inspector with the goods on him. He don't drink himself, ye know. Sells the stuff, but never touches a drop

of it to his own lips. He knows it's pizin. And the funny thing about the whole business is that, though Bean don't touch a drop, year in an' year out this here new Scott Act Inspector, Bill Flint, boozes all the time. Set a sot to catch a rum seller, hey! I never knowed such blanked foolishness."

"Nor I," agreed MacElroy. "I've never met either the peddler or the inspector, but, from what you say, I don't think there's much choice to be made between them. I'd like to have the handling of both of them."

About an hour later a boat put off from the other side of the river and was pulled across the swift, log-laden current on a long slant. One man sat at the oars, and a second sat idly in the stern. The passenger was a big man in a dark overcoat and a hard felt hat.

"Who is that?" asked Archie MacElroy of John Currie.

"That's your man," replied Currie, the joker. "That's the peddler."

"But he was described to me as a little, old man with a very brown face. That fellow is big, and has a red face."

"One of your crew described him to ye, I guess. Well, d'ye think the boys would get Mister Was into trouble? Not on your life!"

"But the man who described Bean to me is not a drinker."

"Maybe not; but ye'll find every poor man on the river tied up to Bean in some way. To some he sells liquor an' to some he loans money, and he's cute enough never to loan money to the lads he sells rum to. I reckon that's your man, right enough. Ask any of the boys."

Archie turned to a member of Currie's crew who was engaged in canting a big stick of pine into deep water, and asked him the name of the man in the stern of the approaching boat.

"Search me," invited the gentleman with the peevy crisply.

"Is it Hedley Bean?" asked the boss from the Blue Bend sharply.

The logger looked at him, then past him at Mr. Currie, then out at the boat. "Sure, that's the identical Mister Was," he said.

Archie went down to meet the boat, but Currie hurried along down stream. The boat grounded,

and Jim Samson scrambled ashore and held the nose of it. The big man in the overcoat and hard hat lurched to his feet and walked the length of the boat unsteadily. As he stepped over the bow Archie grabbed him by the collar.

"So you are the whisky peddler, are you!" he exclaimed. "You look the part, Heaven knows! I've a bone to pick with you, my bold Mr. Bean."

"Wha's that ye say?" cried the other thickly. "Wha's that ye say? Whisky peddler? Me? Leg-go my collar."

A bellow of laughter went up from the watching stream drivers.

"I've got you where I want you," said Archie, "and with the goods on you, by thunder," he added, loosing his hold on the other's collar and yanking a "square-face" from a side-pocket of the overcoat.

The big fellow with the red face staggered, steadied himself for a moment, swung his right arm and landed a hamlike fist on the side of Mac-Elroy's head. The boss reeled under the weight of the clumsy but unexpected blow, and the bottle fell to the ground and smashed on a knob of rock.

A shout of encouragement, delight and mock consternation went up from the loggers on both sides of the river. Archie's eyes flashed. Quick as lightning he bashed the big fellow's hard hat down over his ears and eyes with the flat of his hand, then slapped him on the cursing mouth; then twirled him around by the shoulders and kicked him vigorously about the tails of his overcoat. The loggers cheered and whooped, and all that were within sight on that side of the river came running to the scene of action.

Jim Samson, who had been standing at the bow of the boat all the while, with a look of awe and bewilderment on his face, aroused himself to action at last and laid a diffident hand on Archie MacElroy's arm.

"Now look a here, mister, ye better quit," he said. "That there gent yer knockin' round is the Scott Act Inspector from down river. If ye keep on he'll be havin' the law on ye. He's a constable, he is."

Archie turned on him. "Don't you lie to me!" he exclaimed. "Scott Act Inspector? He's Hedley Bean, the whisky peddler. Currie told me so."

"Yer a liar!" screamed Bill Flint, lurching toward him and lunging heavily at him with both fists. "I hereby arrest ye; damn ye!"

Archie stepped out of his way, uncertain. Flint pulled open his overcoat and displayed his badge of office. One of the drivers thrust the end of a pike-pole between the inspector's feet and brought him down with a crash. The men crowded around him, jeering.

"Lemme help yer head out of that there fine Sunday hat, Mr. Flint," volunteered one; and, seizing the hat by the brim, he crammed it still lower about the ears of the reeling constable. Another advised Archie, in a guarded whisper, to slip along after his own crew. "It's Bill Flint, sure enough," he said, "an' he's the inspector for these parts. He don't know your name, sir, an' he'll never l'arn it from us. We'll josh 'im a bit an' send him back to t'other side of the river."

So Archie slipped away and presently overtook John Currie, who awaited him with a disarming, anxious grin on his wind-tanned face.

"Well, that was a pretty trick you played on me!" exclaimed Archie.

"On you?" replied Currie, in feigned astonishment. "The trick wasn't on you, old sport. It was on that big, boozy dub Flint. Best joke I ever saw in my life, Archie, old socks. Thought I'd die when ye got a holt on his necktie and yanked him ashore. Oh, glory! 'So ye're the whisky peddler, are ye?' says you. Lord, I near bust! And you found the goods on him. Oh, my poor grandmother! And he ups and fetches ye a clip alongside the head, an' then you smashes his hat over his eyes. Shake on it, Archie MacElroy. Ye're the lad who can take a joke."

CHAPTER IV

ARCHIE GETS BACK TO TOWN

Archie MacElroy, though an earnest young man, had been blessed with a sound sense of humor at his birth. So he laughed heartily and shook hands with John Currie. Then the two bosses continued on their way down river, and presently arrived at the place where Currie's cooks had established themselves for the midday meal. Archie went on a mile to where his own crew had halted for dinner. He inquired if anybody had seen Hedley Bean. Nobody had. He called Job Smith and Amos Bigg to him and told them exactly what he thought of them. They said that they had not seen the peddler, knew nothing of how the liquor had come into camp, and explained their absence from their post at the reservation with a remarkable story. They had understood the boss to tell them to go down to Sturgeon Point, on the big river, and keep the eddy there clear of a jam. They lied

fearsomely, with an engaging air of expecting the listener to be polite enough to pretend to believe them.

As for Mr. William Flint, he soon forgot all about his passage at arms with the strange young man who had called him a whisky peddler and broken his collar stud. His head ached. He felt as if a couple of loose half-bricks were shaking about inside his skull. And Currie's men hustled him and jollied him until he climbed back into the stern of the boat. flung his squashed hat into the river, and clasped his poor head between his hands. While he sat thus, the boys crowded thick at the bow of the boat. Several of them even went so far as to climb into the boat and stand between the inspector and the bow, offering to pour cold water on his fevered brow. Then several things happened unknown to the inspector. A wad of paper money passed into the hands of the weak and weary Jim Samson, and several square tins, which had reposed beneath a potato sack and a coil of old rope, passed into the hands of the loggers. These tins were plainly marked "Best Refined Kerosene Oil." At last the loggers left the vicinity

of the boat, with farewell shouts and jeers. The humble Samson set the blade of an oar against the shingle and turned his mild face toward the inspector.

"Will we be gettin' back to dinner, Mr. Flint?" he inquired meekly.

"Back to hell, for all I care," replied the inspector.

They were half-way across when Flint removed his hands from his head, groaned, and looked up.

"Jim, it ain't liquor that's the trouble with me," he said.

"Then maybe ye've got a fever, Mr. Flint, or maybe ye've cotched cold," suggested Jim, gazing at the constable's blotched face with a very keen light of inquiry at the back of his wishy-washy eyes.

"Fever be danged!" retorted Flint. "Jim, ye're a fool; but it's the way ye was made, I reckon, so I ain't blamin' ye for it. Jim, I was doped, sure's the devil is Hedley Bean's own uncle. Oh, my poor head! Oh, my poor stomach! I was doped last night, and if you wasn't such a natural born fool, Jim Samson, ye'd know it without bein' told.

That old peddler doctored my coffee. I feel fit to die."

Jim glanced furtively over his right shoulder, then over his left, then swiftly up and down the river. His eyes came anxiously, craftily back to his passenger, who had again clasped his head with his hands.

"Ye're wrong there, Mr. Flint," he exclaimed in a trembling voice. "He wouldn't do the likes of that—least ways, not to you. He'd be scairt to do it to a constable—to a officer of the gover'ment. And mind ye, I ain't sayin' as how he'd do it, even if he wasn't scairt to. I ain't sayin' nothin', Mr. Flint, one way or t'other; but I don't deny as how I once heard that he give a dose of somethin' to a fish-warden, long ago, over on the Tobique country."

"What's that ye say?" growled Flint, sitting up and showing his face. "Ye've heard that, have ye? Then he done the same to me, by hell!"

"I didn't say nothin', Mr. Flint. It's the gin makes ye feel so bad."

"The gin!" roared the Scott Act inspector, in a tortured and indignant voice. "Don't ye reckon I

know how gin makes me feel by this time? Man, Jim Samson, I don't know how ye find sense enough in yer head to draw your breath with! I'm pizined, that's what's the trouble with me; an' a feller who'll dope one man will dope another."

"Sure now, Mr. Flint, I didn't say nothin' like that," whined Jim.

"I know what ye said," retorted the other. He leaned forward unsteadily and glared at the rower. "Jim Samson, I take ye for an honest man, though bone-poor," he continued. "I know of an easy job in a grocery store way down to St. John I could get for a man like you—aye, and of a bunch of greenbacks figgerin' up to one hundred an' twenty-five dollars. The job an' the money an' movin' expenses is for the man who can show me how to catch that old varmint Hedley Bean, red-handed, with proof enough ag'in' him to send him to jail for a spell."

Samson beached the boat, jumped ashore and hauled hard on the painter. He turned his face over his shoulder and gazed at the bushes along the bank. His freckled cheeks were flushed and his meaningless eyes glimmered. As the inspector

lurched heavily against his shoulder in getting ashore he whispered, "I'll talk to ye up at the house, Mr. Flint." He licked his lips nervously as he hauled the boat high and dry and locked the chain painter around a sturdy spruce.

The two big drives moved steadily down the rattling river all afternoon, the head of Simpson's mixing with the tail of Marsh & West's. A few small jams commenced to form at certain kinks and eddies in the stream, only to be cleared in short order by the daring drivers. The main body of Archie's crew kept well ahead of Currie's gang.

At the fall of dusk both crews gathered to their cooks and camps on the same side of the river. The boats ferried some of the men across. Others made the passage of the swollen and lively river standing upright on single logs, now using their pike-poles to balance themselves and again as double-bladed paddles. Their heavy boots, each armed with about fifty short fangs of steel, clung to the plunging timbers, bit deep into the slippery bark, performed a hundred marvels of agility. Some of the more daring or skilful of these single-log men added to the difficulties of the passage by setting

the big sticks which they rode to twirling like mad beneath their feet. Others, who made the crossing where the logs were running more thickly, would run the length of one log, from the downstream end to the upper end, spring from there to the lower end of another, race the length of that and jump again, thus crossing the swift river and swiftly drifting logs in a straight line from shore to shore. The capers they cut, inspired by sheer devilment and a sense of mastery of the situation, were enough to make an ordinary man's hair stand on end.

The fires were piled high with green birch from the thickets and driftwood from the edge of the tide. Supper was eaten and the tarpaulins spread. Pipes were lighted and three or four mouth-organs were produced. Archie was aware of a suspicious spirit of liveliness among his men; but, though he moved quietly among them, he failed to discover any flasks or bottles. But he felt pretty sure that they had not exhausted the supply acquired the night before.

Some of the boys began to sing, and some of their songs were of a strongly personal character.

One of their "come-all-ye's," which they rendered at the tops of their voices, began like this:

Come all ye hardy lumbermer
An' listen to me tell
How Johnny Sims swum half a mile
To court Tom Scanlon's Nell.

The song went on to describe how young Mr. Sims attired himself in his best clothes, borrowed a canoe without asking for it, and set out to cross the river to see his best girl; how the canoe turned over in midstream, because Johnny was sitting too high on the cross-bar for fear of injuring his Sunday pants; how he swam the rest of the way and arrived at Tom Scanlon's, wet and hatless, only to find Nell sitting on the knee of a rival.

Now it happened that both Johnny Sims and Tom Scanlon were members of Mr. Currie's crew. Archie MacElroy did not know this, however. Also, he was blissfully ignorant of the fact that Mr. Currie's men had been supplied with several gallons of the best refined kerosene oil. So he told the men to make a trifle less noise, warned them of the hard water to be driven through on the mor-

row, then rolled himself in his blankets and fell asleep.

It was not long before answering songs and whoops of derision began to float down from the other camp to the sensitive ears of Archie's songsters. Bob Evans circulated among his men, threatening to punch their heads if they didn't shut their mouths; but they turned his wrath aside with soft answers and a tin mug brimming with hard liquor. The foreman drank deep, reflected that if he once commenced punching heads he would be forced to go on with it indefinitely, thought better of it, and retired to his blankets near the slumbering boss. The shouts and songs of the other camp came down stronger on the chill night air.

"Them fellers is liquorin' up right smart," remarked Red Nick Jones to Jean Benoist. "Guess they've connected with Mister Was, sure enough. Let's give 'em that thar song about Johnny Sims ag'in. They like that."

"One minute," said a sandy-haired young man as big as a two-year-old steer. "By the sound of them, I cal'late they're movin' down this way.

We'd best hustle out to meet them, so's not ter disturb the boss."

Archie was awakened by a hand on his shoulder, gripping hard.

"Turn out," yelled Bob Evans into his ear. "The boys are at it like cats an' dogs—our gang an' Currie's. They're fightin' all along the shore an' chuckin' each other into the river."

Archie flung his blankets aside and sprang to his feet.

"Now, easy does it, Mr. MacElroy," cautioned Evans. "They're just fightin' mad, an' neither better nor worse than that. Sing out an' let 'em know who's comin' before ye jump into the trouble. Ye don't want'er go an' get yerself killed—an' neither do I."

The shouts, oaths, and yelps of conflict came to their ears from a hundred yards farther down the shore. They started running toward the wild, inhuman tumult. They were joined by Pat McGowen, the cook, with a frying-pan of huge proportions in his right fist. The running was rough and tricky, but they took the risks of a fall. As

they neared the scattered scene of action McGowen announced their approach.

"Here comes the boss," he roared. "Here comes Mr. MacElroy, an' a couple more handy bruisers. Quit yer fightin', ye lost tribes ye, or I'll clout ye over yer nobbs to-night an' the boss'll dock ye a day's pay to-morry. Quit it, or ever son of a mustard plaster of ye'll wish he'd stopt home to mind the baby."

There was that in the cook's voice or words which caused a lull in the nearer edges of the battle. Across the lull came the hoarse and angry voice of Currie, threatening the fighters with sudden and painful extinction, and commanding them to return to their camps. Then Archie MacElroy gave tongue. He announced that every man of his crew who showed a bruise or a cut in the morning would be docked a full day's pay. At that the uproar lessened still more. Then somebody shouted, "It's worth the price, boys. I'm marked already! Let her rip!"

And again the battle joined.

Archie, Bob Evans, and the cook mixed with the nearest edge of the fray. Archie dragged men

apart and flung them to the ground. Evans hit them with his fists swiftly and relentlessly. He was a good workman. Even in the dark he seemed to know just where to land his soothing punches and jabs. Pat McGowen beat them over the heads with the bottom of the frying-pan. The strokes of the thin iron upon the thick skulls added a strange and ominous note to the general tumult. So the senseless combat went on for ten or fifteen minutes, when Archie was suddenly rushed by a huge fellow and struck a glancing blow on the jaw. It was unexpected. He reeled aside, tripped and fell full length into a clump of young spruces on the slope of the bank. The big logger passed heedlessly on his way, shouting and blindly flailing the air. Archie was badly shaken, as much by the fall as the blow, and lay still for fifteen or twenty seconds. Then he hoisted himself to his knees, and was about to return to the fray, for his blood was up now, when a match was struck within a few yards of him and on a level with his eyes.

Some one sitting quietly among the spruces was lighting a pipe. The little flame sprang into being, grew and cleared, then waxed and waned as it was

indrawn upon the tobacco by the breath of the secluded smoker. Archie stared. By the light of the match held to the bowl of the pipe he saw the face of an old man, brown, dry as leather, and hairless. It was the face of Hedley Bean. The driver's description had been perfect. So the old devil was sitting safely in the shelter of the bushes, was he, enjoying the tumult of his handiwork! The boss's blood boiled with indignation. The match went out; but Archie jumped true in the dark, upset the peddler, grabbed him by the collar of his coat, and dragged him down the slope and into the open. Mr. Bean kicked and twisted and cursed, but without avail. Archie yanked him to his feet, swung him around and rushed him toward the yammering center of the conflict. Together they stumbled over prostrate, struggling forms. They bumped against wrestling couples.

"I'll give you a dose of your own medicine, you old devil!" cried the boss, and flung the peddler into the heart of a group of kickers and sluggers. Disgusted with the entire performance, Archie returned to his deserted camp, rolled himself in his blankets, and fell asleep. If full-grown men chose

to make beasts and senseless fools of themselves, let them stand the consequences!

It was late when he opened his eyes. The cooks were at work, one of them with a yellow and purple eye. Pat McGowen was driving them. Men lay here and there, some on the tarpaulins, others on the wet shingle. Some of them exposed bruised and bloody faces to the sky. Some of them moaned in their heavy sleep of exhaustion. Archie went over to McGowen and shook hands with that big and worthy cook.

"Have you seen Hedley Bean this morning?" he asked.

"No, sir, an' not likely to," replied Pat. "Why d'ye ask?"

Archie told him about finding the peddler in the bushes and pitching him into the thick of the fight. Pat was hugely tickled to hear it.

"But the old feller's tough's a whisp-lash," he said. "He wasn't killed or even busted, for I didn't see nothin' of him layin' round after the fight. He got away. Some didn't or couldn't, if they'd wanted to. Three of our lads an' five of Currie's is fair *hors de combat*, with busted ribs,

or busted arms, or lumps on their heads as big as my fut. I fixed them up as well as I could, an' they'll jist hev to grin an' sit tight till we get down to some sort of doctor or other."

Archie had his wounded men put into a boat and sent down ahead of the drive. Mr. Currie did the same. Camp was not struck until after dinner; but the sticks had been moving all night and all morning, as far as the drivers knew. At five o'clock, ten miles below the scene of the battle, they found a masterly jam. The boat containing the wounded men had been portaged around it. Both crews worked at the heap of tangled logs until supper time, but without results. After that they were glad to roll in their blankets and sleep.

In the morning the jam was broken by a generous use of dynamite. Four days later both drives were safe in the booms at Kingsclear, and at ten o'clock on the following morning Archie MacElroy reached the little city of St. Ann's. He hurried straight to the modest cottage near the lower end of the town which he and the captain had occupied together for years. He was met at the door by

Denis Whalen, an old ex-soldier who cooked for them and did the housework.

"The captain's on the sick list, sir," said Whalen.

"Same thing?" queried Archie drearily.

"Sure, the same complaint, sir. He was off to the mess till three o'clock this mornin', at the bridge. He come home entirely unfit for inspection, Mr. Archie."

Archie went upstairs with a heavy heart, bathed and changed, and went to his father's door. He knocked, but received no answer; then he opened the door and looked in. The windows were shaded. The room was tidy, for Denis Whalen had folded away the captain's clothes and put everything straight. Captain Ian MacElroy, V. C., lay in the narrow bed, flat on his straight back, with his eyes closed. His fine mustache shone snow-white against his dark and mottled cheeks.

CHAPTER V

BACK TO THE BLUE BEND

The son stood in the middle of the room, gazing at the father with a gloomy face. The young man's eyes darkened with pain, and a slow tightening of the lips showed the disgust that chilled him. He stared intently at the head on the pillow. The head was too narrow, he thought—narrower than his own, thank Heaven! The face was still distinguished, though the lines of beauty were smudged and coarsened. The nose was still fine and bold, but the mouth in the shadow of the white mustache was pitifully weak. This old gentleman in the bed, sleeping off the effects of a drunken spree, was the man who had risked his life twice in one day to save the lives of others. This was the man who had won and broken the heart of a beautiful woman—perhaps the hearts of more than one. This was the man who had squandered thousands of pounds in shameful pur-

suits and senseless vanities, heedless of the suffering of wife and children, careless of his parents and the good name that had been his.

Archie's gaze slipped from his father's face to the thin, brown hand lying so clean and idle and innocent on the quilt. It was a well-shaped hand, shrunken a little with age. He eyed it with no small degree of wonder and a deal of pity. There was a thin scar, now as fine as a hair, across the back of it—an honorable scar. This thin old hand, with its slim fingers and polished nails, had sabered five men in one bloody and heroic half hour long ago.

Archie left the room noiselessly. He walked to the offices of Marsh & West, on River Street, at the upper end of the town. Mr. West congratulated him on his good work of the winter and spring. John West was a big man in more ways than one—not a big little man in any sense. He liked and admired young MacElroy. Now he closed the door of his private office and laid a hand on Archie's shoulder.

"I played a couple of rubbers at the mess last night," he said.

Archie looked him steadily in the eyes, smiled wanly, and nodded.

"The captain was in a bad way, but very quiet and well mannered, as usual, until supper time," continued Mr. West. "He drank a great deal during the evening, lad, and at supper his mood turned nasty. He has a particularly biting way with him at times. He is making enemies."

"I can do nothing," said Archie. "I have tried. It is useless."

"I understand that you have to support him," said Mr. West. "It is hard on you. It must cripple you, Archie, and promises to make an old man of you before your time. He has expensive tastes, I imagine."

"But I spend very little on myself," replied Archie, "and you pay me well for my work. He has promised not to run into debt."

"We pay you no more than you are worth to us," returned West, "and I see no reason why you should not be worth more in a little while. I see no reason why you should not manage our entire lumber business for us in a few years. I can think of no better man for the job, if you continue as

you are shaping now. And that would lead naturally to a partnership. The only hitch I can foresee is your father. I am speaking frankly, Archie, because we are friends, you and I. Marsh was at the mess last night—worse luck—and the captain had a passage-at-arms with him after supper. Richard Marsh is a fine old man, but he lacks a sense of humor and entertains a far too high opinion of his own dignity and importance. Your father, though undeniably intoxicated, made old Marsh look very much like a fool. Marsh is furious. While you are off in the wilderness, lad, working hard, your father sits at home and queers your future."

"You are very kind, sir," said Archie; "but, for the life of me, I can think of no way of controlling my father. Even if I were to spend all my time in town I could do nothing. He is my father, after all. I shall willingly go to Mr. Marsh immediately and beg his pardon for my father's words, whatever they were."

"That might help, lad. Marsh is in his office now," replied West.

The two shook hands; then Archie left Mr.

West's office and went to the senior partner's room. Mr. Marsh was in. He looked up from his desk and nodded curtly. Archie advanced to the front of the desk.

"I hear that my father insulted you in some way last night, sir," he said, "and I have come to beg your pardon for whatever it was he said or did. I know that he was intoxicated at the time. I have seen him this morning, and he is still sleeping. I am very sorry that anything of the kind should have happened. I beg your pardon, sir. I am powerless to do more."

The elderly gentleman fidgeted in his chair and tapped the writing-pad before him with his eyeglasses. He cleared his throat dryly.

"It was very painful, very humiliating," he said. "I was never so ashamed in all my life before; but, of course, Mr. MacElroy, I can understand that it was not your fault. Of course you cannot keep your father in order, especially when you are out of town yourself. Let us say no more about it. I hear from Mr. West that your work on the Blue Bend, in the lumber-woods as well as on the drive,

has been very satisfactory. I am glad. Good morning to you, Mr. MacElroy."

Archie left Mr. Marsh with a heavy heart and returned to Mr. West.

"I can see that Mr. Marsh is deeply offended," he said, "but he was very decent about it. And now about work, sir. Have you something more for me to do in the woods, somewhere?"

"Why are you in such a hurry to get back to the woods?" asked West.

"I feel more contented in the woods than in town," replied Archie.

"Well, I have plenty of work for you. I want you to cruise the timber on the headwaters of the Blue Bend on both sides. We will operate there next winter, if you think it wise—twenty miles or so above our present camps. If the country is as good as I have heard, you will want to get a gang in early in September to build the camps. But you must take a couple of weeks off now, lad. You deserve a holiday. By the way, have you seen Laura yet?"

"No," said MacElroy, coloring quickly. "I got

in only this morning. I found her invitation for the dance waiting for me, though."

"Yes. Perhaps you will drop around this evening, lad?"

"I should like to. Thanks very much, sir. I hope they're all well."

"Very well, thanks. By the way, Archie, we have a young fellow staying with us now from New York—a distant relative of my wife's. He and Laura used to know each other in England—yes, and in Germany. Horne is his name. Very nice boy. You'll like him, I think."

He eyed the young man keenly, but kindly, while he spoke. Archie understood, and his color deepened. The big-hearted John West had guessed his secret, felt sorry for him, and was evidently trying to let him down easily. He understood it all. His heart warmed to John West; but he was astonished to find how calmly it received the hint concerning Laura and Mr. Horne.

Archie went home and lunched by himself. He tried to think of his future—of the fine prospects suggested to him by Mr. West. He tried to consider some plan of keeping his father in better con-

trol. He tried to think of Laura West, and of what it would mean to him if she married this man Horne; but his mind shied at all these important tasks, and raced up those miles and miles of smooth and broken water to the froth-clotted current of the Blue Bend in front of the Indian village and the big house on the hill. And again he held the girl to his side and came cautiously to the surface of the shouting river; and again he saw her eyes open full upon him. As they had drifted down at the tail of the log a strand of her wet hair had drifted across his chin and clung there. He felt it again. And again he heard her voice; again he carried her ashore in his arms. It was quite ridiculous of him to try to consider the serious problems of life.

He went to the office after lunch and toiled over some accounts of the camp supplies of the past winter until four o'clock. He came straight home and went up to his father's room. He found the captain in a silk dressing-gown, seated in an arm-chair by one of the windows. The hero held a letter in his hand, which he promptly thrust into his pocket. He extended his trembling right hand.

"Forgive me for not getting up, my boy," he said pleasantly. "The fact is, I'm not as young as I used to be. Glad to see you back, son."

Archie hurried forward, bowed, and pressed the unsteady hand with every sign of respect. After all, the old man was his father and had done brave deeds as well as ignoble deeds in his day.

"I am sorry that you are not feeling well this morning, sir," he said. "I wish you would go a bit easier."

The lashes of the captain's fine eyes flickered. Then he smiled.

"Let us talk of something more important than an old man's failings," he said. "You look well. The wild life agrees with you. When I was your age I could stand any amount of roughing it. We have tough fiber in us, we MacElroys of Glen Sneath. Did you have any notable adventures on your way out of the woods?"

Archie sat down with a somewhat crooked smile on his lips, and his father passed him a box of cigarettes. He took one and lit it.

"We had a bit of trouble just below the mouth of the Blue Bend," he said, and gave a vivid ac-

count of the fight between the two gangs. The captain enjoyed it, and his fine eyes flashed.

"I've been offered a holiday," said Archie, "and am thinking of going upriver—up the Blue Bend again for ten days' fishing. Will you come along with me, sir? An outing would do you good, I'm sure."

"Oh, yes, and keep me out of mischief," returned his father, grinning. "No, lad, I don't feel up to it just now. The water is far too high for fishing, as I should think you would know."

"But it is falling fast," said Archie, somewhat disconcerted.

"Undoubtedly. It'll be low enough and clear enough for fishing in three weeks. What is the attraction on the Blue Bend, my boy?"

"Attraction, sir? Why, I like the river—and I don't like the town."

"Just as you say; but you can't throw dust in my eyes. Take your holidays on the Blue Bend if you want to, but count me out until the weather warms a bit. I'll be quite comfortable here with Whalen."

Archie sighed resignedly. He should have liked

to take the conscienceless captain out of town with him for a few weeks, away from opportunities for mischief; but, on the other hand, he would be much freer on the Blue Bend without him. He accepted another of his father's superfine cigarettes.

"I suppose you need some money, sir?" he queried delicately.

"Not a cent," replied the captain proudly.

"Not a cent!" exclaimed Archie in astonishment. "But what about your tobacco bill and your mess bills? You must need some money."

"I clean forgot the little bills," answered the captain with a short laugh. "I'll be very glad to have fifty dollars, my boy."

Archie was glad to find the sum required to be so little, and handed over five ten dollar bills.

Archie saw Laura and Mr. Horne that evening. Laura was very kind—almost as kind as usual. And Mr. Horne seemed a very amiable young man. But the thing that was in the air could not be ignored. It depressed young MacElroy for a little while, for back on the Wests' veranda he felt something of the old enthralment. He smoked a

cigar with Mr. West and went home early. During the evening he gathered the information, from just what source he could not say, that Jacob Horne was worth a million dollars. Once off the Wests' premises, out of sight of Laura, this did not seem to matter. He was in fairly good spirits when he reached home.

Archie MacElroy left for the Blue Bend three days after his arrival in town. A railroad carried him to within thirty miles of the mouth of that river, left him and his outfit and canoe at a little settlement on the southern shore of the St. John, and swung away toward the United States. He engaged a guide at the settlement, and together they started upriver next morning. It was high water and hard poling, with several stiff rapids to be carried around, and it was not until two days later that they reached the mouth of the Blue Bend. Archie's companion was a young woodsman named Andrew Flemming, whose home was on the main river. He was a sportsman's guide, but usually worked in the woods in winter and on the drives in spring. He had worked for Archie's concern all through the past winter and on the drive. He

was a cheerful, daring, good-hearted young fellow, of about Archie's age and size. Archie liked him, and on his part he liked and admired "the boss." They camped a night on the mouth of the Blue Bend, near the scene of the battle between the two gangs.

"I'll jist tell ye agin, ye'll git no fishin' worth j'intin' yer rod for on this stream so early in the year," said Andy Flemming, as the two smoked their pipes by the fire. "But I reckon ye know what ye're about, Mr. MacElroy, better than me. Maybe ye're lookin' for old Bean?"

"No, I'm not looking for old Bean," replied Archie. "I gave him a run for his money that night of the scrap, as you know. To be quite frank with you, Andy, man to man and friend to friend, I'm not expecting to do any fishing, either."

Andy eyed him curiously and laughed.

"I know what ye're after," he said. "I knowed it when ye first got off the cars and asked me to come up the Blue Bend with ye. I was expectin' ye, anyhow. A man don't pick a girl like that out of the water, be he town-bred or woods-bred, an'

then go home an' forgit all about it. That is, not unless he's got a best girl already."

"You may be right," replied Archie. "But that is not my only reason for coming up again. I want to know more of the old chap you call Chief Morgan. Why does he live on the Blue Bend in that big house?"

"I guess he's got a couple of shingles loose," said Andy. "That's what most folks think on the main river. He built that thar house of hisn more'n twenty year ago, they say; but nobody knows where he come from nor what he ever built on the Blue Bend for. He seems to have lashin's of money, an' he owns miles of timber an' won't sell an acre of it nor let an ax go into it. Ye see, he looks after the Injuns as if they was hisn—bosses them, feeds them, an' gives 'em work on his farm and as fire-wardens in his timber. He's bin away once or twice for as much as a year at a time. An' he has people stoppin' with him from away pretty near every summer—young people mostly, but rich, like himself. Noel Sacobie told me as how the folks who's with him now has bin with him since last September—an oldish lady

who's related to the chief an' the young lady ye picked out of the river, who's the old lady's daughter, Noel Sacobie says. Noel says as how he guesses they ain't rich, like most of the chief's friends, an' that she's a widow woman. The girl's a wonder, anyhow. Say, it was great, the way she tried her gol-darnedest to clear that jam for us."

"It was fine," agreed Archie. "Very few women would have tried it."

"Sure! Ye could count them as ye would on the fingers of one ear," said Andy Flemming.

They made an early start next morning, and, while Andy stood in the stern and poled, Archie plied a paddle in the bow. They ran the canoe ashore several hundred yards below the lower line of the reservation. It was then about ten o'clock. It was the first paddling Archie had done that season, and he felt the burn of tired muscles straight across his shoulders. They hid the canoe and outfit among the alders.

"An' now what d'ye cal'late to do?" asked Andy.

"The old man seems to have taken a dislike to

me," replied the boss; "so I'll just scout a bit. You wait here."

Archie walked along the shore, rounded a bushy point, and came face to face with the girl whom he had rescued from the river a few days before. The girl uttered a little cry of astonishment. Archie snatched off his cap and ran toward her. She turned when he was within a yard of her and began to walk slowly away. He halted, thunder-struck.

"Miss Morgan—Jessie!" he called.

She did not pause or turn. He sprang forward and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"What is the matter?" he asked wildly. "Why do you run away from me? We are friends. We were friends. What has happened?"

She turned her head and looked at him. Her small face was white and her eyes flashed. Her warm, slender shoulder trembled beneath his hand. Her lips curled scornfully.

"Are you so poor?" she asked.

"Poor?" he repeated in bewilderment. "Yes, I am poor."

"So poor that you needed to take a reward of

five hundred dollars for saving my life? Oh, I thought you—you were—a gentleman!"

Archie dropped his hand from her shoulder and stepped back. His face flamed darkly.

"It is a lie!" he cried.

CHAPTER VI

THE MACELROY AND THE MORGAN

"It is a lie!" repeated young MacElroy, shaking with indignation. "And a mean, caddish one at that! Morgan was your informant, I suppose. The old sneak offered me the money the day we were in the river—and I refused it then—in terms a fool would understand. And since that I've neither heard nor seen anything of the money. Whoever says that I took the money is a cad and a liar!"

"I said so—so I'm a cad and a liar, I suppose?" returned Miss Morgan with dry lips and a dangerous light in her fine eyes.

"But you do not say so now. I have told you," replied Archie.

"You have told me! So I'm to believe everything that you say? Upon my word, Mr. MacElroy, you take too much for granted. I'm to take your word rather than the word of a member of

my father's family, am I? You are a stranger—and the boss of a lumber-camp. Mr. Morgan is—well, I know what he is. So you call me a cad and a liar?"

"I never did," retorted Archie, his face and eyes glowing with anger and confusion. "True, I'm the boss of a lumber-camp—and no worse for that. However, if you think I'm no more than that, why object to the idea that I accepted money for helping you from the river? Even Morgan was good enough to say that I saved your life; and if he values your life at five hundred dollars, and the poor lumberjack accepts that price, why feel as you do about it?"

"So you admit now that you took the money?"

"I do nothing of the kind. I've never seen a cent of the money, and I've never heard a word about it since the day I helped you out of the river. But if you think of me as you do, I cannot see that it is any affair of yours whether I accepted it or not."

The girl had the grace to look slightly confused, but she rallied briskly. Her beautiful eyes were flaming. The color flamed and faded in her smooth

cheeks and across her white brow. Her throat pulsed.

"You need not shout," she said. "I can hear you perfectly. You expect me to take your word against that of an old and honorable man of my own family? I refuse to do it. It is absurd. I haven't the least idea who you are or where you come from. All that I know about you is that you are rude and impertinent. That is enough."

"Quite," agreed Archie with gray lips. He turned on his heel, then turned again to Jessie Morgan. "But I wonder what you knew of me, or thought of me, that other day? Something more creditable, evidently."

The young woman blushed hotly, and for a second her glance wavered from his. Quickly her eyes steadied and flashed again.

"In the confusion of danger—and the heat of gratitude—I made a mistake," she said slowly. "I admit that I was—very foolish."

"Gratitude is a mistake. It is foolish to allow a sense of obligation to cloud one's better judgment," said MacElroy unpleasantly.

Then he turned fairly on his heels, and would

have gone away but for the sudden and unexpected appearance of the chief himself. The old man issued from the alders in a towering passion, his gray eyes burning at their depths, like noon sunshine on snow-ice, the masses of white hair on his face standing out as if blown upon by a wind. His huge, gaunt frame seemed to swell and threaten. The long arms swung loose at his sides, the hands clenched menacingly. He confronted Archie MacElroy and stared at him, breathing loudly. The young woman gasped, and some of the overcharge of blood slipped from her face. Archie was startled for a moment. He retreated a pace, but his recovery was swift and absolute. His face hardened. He smiled grimly.

"Eavesdropping," he said quietly; "sneaking around in the bushes. Well, it is what I expected of you. What do you want now?"

Chief Morgan did not answer instantly, for the sufficient reason that his rage cut off his supply of breath and stiffened his tongue. His wide shoulders trembled, and the white glare of his eyes became yet more bright and intense. He was a daunting sight, but Archie McElroy stood his

ground and returned his ferocious glare with a glance of scornful inquiry. He even went so far as to produce a cigarette-case and light a cigarette, flipping the dead match airily at the old man's feet. Then Archibald Morgan found his breath and his tongue. For the first half-dozen words his voice issued from him in a harsh bellow.

"Away with you, or I'll do you a mischief!" he roared. "Get off my land! Didn't I tell you never to set foot on land of mine again? I'll teach you how to talk to a lady! Flaunt me to my face, will you? Run, or I'll strike you! I'll throw you into the river!"

"I hope, you old fool, that you are not so ignorant as to consider yourself a man of honor or breeding," returned Archie, calm and sneering. "If so, I have much pleasure in setting you right on that point. I don't know who you are or what you think you are—but I do know that you are a snarling, ill-bred old savage, and an underhand sneak into the bargain—and a liar! You have lied about me to Miss Morgan. Why, I don't know and cannot guess. Deny it if you dare!"

"If I dare! I deny it absolutely. But why

should I pay any heed to you? I know you—and the rogue you call father. Out of my way, or take the consequences of your impudence.”

“What do you know of my father? If he is an enemy of yours, old man, then I’m proud of him. He was a man once.”

“He was never a man! Ian MacElroy was never half a man. A fool, a rogue, and a cad. I’ve described your father, young man. Now, go away!”

“You’ve described yourself, but have overlooked the word liar.”

“Have a care! My temper is not of the coolest. I warn you.”

“Cool? Man, I never saw a temper so cool and cautious. But you are an old man, and it would not be fair to expect to find courage in you. Tongue-courage—that is all you have. And with your courage you have lost your sense of shame—if you ever possessed either. I think it doubtful. Will you tell me why you lied to this woman about me?”

The chief swung furiously at Archie’s face; but Archie ducked, and the old man staggered. Jessie cried out sharply. Several Indians appeared on the

scene and looked inquiringly at Morgan. They were ready to advance upon the stranger—but the chief waved them back. He gasped for breath. His rage was horrible to see—doubly horrible in one so old. His voice cracked with passion as he screamed at young MacElroy.

“Do you dare?” he cried. “You call me shameless—a liar—you who lie now by look and word? You told her you know nothing of the money. You repeat it before my face. Man, you equal your unspeakable father!”

“I see that you are hopeless,” retorted Archie scornfully. “I give you credit for being only half-witted. But I advise you not to hit at me again, old man, or I may forget that you are old and doddering.”

He turned to Miss Morgan and lifted his cap.

“This is unpleasant—and evidently useless,” he said. “I’ll wish you good-day—and joy of your precious relative.”

“Not so fast!” screamed the chief, and fell upon him with blind fury. The onslaught was unexpected; and Archie went down on the muddy shore, struggling, with the old man blanketing him. He

could not clear his arms from the old man's embrace. He could not kick. He lay with his face in the mud, trying to twist around so that he might strike upward. His muscles creaked with his efforts. Then one of the Indians joined the chief on top of him. So Archie lay still, breathless and helpless, choked with mud and indignation.

They jerked Archie roughly to his feet—and this proved to be an error in judgment. For a second or two he hung inert against Noel Sacobie, gasping for breath and clearing mud from his mouth, his eyes shut, his chest heaving. But this was only for a few seconds. He opened his eyes suddenly and sprang from Sacobie's supporting shoulder. A Maliseet, who was stooping to pass a length of rope around Archie's ankles, found himself backsomersaulting into the river. Then the chief, who was trying to recover his breath after his valorous and successful attack, felt fingers of iron upon him, and next moment lit on the flat of his long back among the alders. Then Noel Sacobie, as decent an old redskin as you could find in the country, got a jab on the jaw that sent him to the mat.

"Come on, confound you!" cried Archie. "Bring the whole tribe!"

So they came, old men and young, old women and children. The young squaws did not join the fray. The population of the reservation swarmed to the assistance of their adopted chief. They came without weapons, without anger, without skill—but with plenty of purpose. Archie went at them in silence. Nobody shouted or swore. Archie pushed the old men and old women about, slapped the very young, punched the full-grown and active. Squaws clung mildly but tightly about his feet and knees. Ancient basketmakers clung to his back. Nobody struck him. Strong men grasped his wrists and twined their arms around his neck. Morgan looked on with a sardonic grin, the girl with a white face and dim eyes.

Archie went down again, unable to support the weight of clinging bodies. He did not struggle, for he knew it was useless. He saw now that he should have broken away before they closed in on him and run to where he had left Andy Flemming. They might have been able to get the canoe into the water and so escape. Then he remembered that he

had stayed because Morgan had ordered him to go. He was glad that he had not run, but he was sorry that he had not hit the chief.

They bound his hands and feet, gagged him, and two men lifted him. They carried him along the shore for twenty or thirty yards, then up a gap through the alders and willows to the shacks of the reservation. Chief Morgan walked at his side, not very briskly, and gave orders in a harsh voice. Archie could not see the girl, who was evidently behind him with the crowd. The chief scattered the crowd with a word. Archie was carried through the village and along a path which slanted upward through a wood of young spruces and birches. The path grew steeper, then opened upon a clearing. Archie felt a sudden faintness and suffocation. The clumsy gag—a strip of dirty blanket—was choking him. He flopped like an expiring fish, wrenched his feet and shoulders from the hands of the carriers, and fell to the ground. Old Morgan grabbed him; but the next moment Jessie pushed the chief aside, sank to her knees, and tore the gag from his face. Her eyes were flashing. She turned angrily upon the old man, while Archie

squirmed on the ground, struggling for a full breath.

"I see no need of being brutal!" she cried.

Archie was carried the rest of the way with a free mouth, but he did not shout for help. For one thing, he felt too sick to shout; for another, he reasoned dizzily that if he should shout, and Flemming should hear him and come to his rescue now, the result would be disastrous. He had no idea what they intended to do with him, but he felt that he was safer with Andy Flemming at liberty than if both were in the chief's power. He was sure that Morgan was insane. Andy would begin to search for him in an hour or two, he knew.

The two Maliseets carried young MacElroy across the first rough clearing, across a plowed field, through a belt of big trees, and up a wide, sloping lawn. He beheld the big white house, with its green shutters, high porch, and wide front door with wonder and bitterness in his heart, and a momentary twinge of apprehension. Who was this old Archibald Morgan, and what was he, and what was his game? Why had he built this fine house on the Blue Bend, with terraces and sloping lawns,

miles and miles away from civilization? And what did he know of Ian MacElroy, Archie wondered dizzily.

Chief Morgan strode ahead up the terraces, up the steps of the porch to the wide door, and the men who carried Archie followed at his heels. The chief opened the door and they all entered a wide hall. The carriers halted here, and again the young woman appeared. She clasped Morgan by the arm.

"What do you mean to do with him?" she whispered.

Archie overheard this, but he did not look at her. He examined the hall as well as he could. He felt that he hated that beautiful, unjust young woman. The hall was large and square. The walls were hung with half a dozen dark pictures in tarnished gilt frames, a glazed map of the province, and decorated with the antlers of moose, caribou, and deer. There were rugs on the floor. Magazines and papers lay on a big table, a few easy-chairs stood about, and a fire of logs smoldered on a wide hearth. A staircase went up from one corner of the hall.

"Follow me," said the chief to the men, without

paying the least attention to Jessie's question. He shook her hand roughly from his arm and strode across the hall. He pulled a key from his pocket, unlocked a door, opened it, and stood aside to let the carriers pass in ahead of him. The young woman darted into the room in front of the men. Morgan ordered her out, but she defied him. The men entered and laid MacElroy on a couch. Morgan whispered to one of them, after which they both nodded and left the room and the house. Then the old man ordered Jessie out of the room again. She established herself behind a wide and heavy writing-table and refused to go.

"I'm afraid to leave you alone with this man," she said, "because you have such a beastly temper. I'll stay right here—for your own sake. You have no right to injure him, or even to confine him, because he happens to be a—a dishonest person and the son of a man against whom you seem to hold a grudge. As for trespassing, that is absurd. He was on government land, anyway. The best thing you can do now is to let him go about his business. He'll be afraid to come back again."

"You forget who you are talking to," retorted the chief.

"Not at all," replied the girl. "I sometimes wonder if you are entirely sane. You have no right to take the law into your own hands."

"You have the courage of the devil to speak to me like that," said the old man. "I sometimes wonder if you have fully grasped the fact that your father died without— But let that pass! That is a family matter. You heard what this fellow called me, I suppose?"

"I called you a liar, a savage, and a sneak—and I stand by it," said the bound captive on the couch.

Morgan faced him with a furious expression on his big, thin, bewhiskered face. A white flame danced in his eyes. He turned suddenly to the table, opened a drawer, and searched among a mass of loose papers. At last he threw the papers onto the table and spread them out. He wrenched other drawers open and searched through their contents.

"Did you take it, Jessie?" he cried, facing the girl.

"What are you talking about?" she asked. "I never touch your table."

"The check," he said. "It came back from the bank with others, as I told you, endorsed and paid. Where has it gone to?"

"You told me of the check, but you did not show it to me," replied Miss Morgan meaningly. "I know nothing of it except what I have heard from you. Look again. It may be in your pocket."

Her eyes were bright and her voice was cold with suspicion. The old man hunted through his pockets, through the drawers of the table again, under the books on the table, and all around the room. He could not find what he was looking for. At last he gave it up, turned suddenly upon Jessie, who had followed him in the interest of the search, and grasped her by the right wrist.

"You have it!" he exclaimed, glaring at her. "I might have known as much. I'm an old fool! You are against me—and hand and glove with this fellow. What else brought him back here but to see you?"

She struggled to get away from him, but failed.

"You are crazy!" she cried. "I never saw the check—and I'm now inclined to believe that it

never existed. I don't know why he came back—and I don't care."

"I came back to see you," said Archie MacElroy from the couch. "I assure you that I'll never make the same mistake again."

Both the old man and the girl looked at him for a moment in silence. Morgan sneered. The girl's face was colorless, and her eyes suddenly grew dim. The powerful old man still held her by the wrist. He turned and dragged her toward the door. She resisted strenuously, but he pulled her along, thrust her out of the room and shut the door. There was a key in the massive lock. He turned it, glaring over his shoulder at his prisoner.

CHAPTER VII

FLEMMING TO THE RESCUE

He moved across to the couch and stared down at Archie.

"I see that you are a chip off the old block," he sneered. "Dishonest and dishonorable! Conscienceless! Absolutely brazen—and not lacking in animal courage. Your father was better looking at your age. He was also better mannered. If I were younger, I'd untie you and thrash you to within an inch of your life. But I'm not young enough to undertake to thrash you untied—and I certainly cannot thrash you as you are."

"You might send for five or six of your men to do it," suggested Archie, with curling lip.

"I might," replied the other with bitter calm. "if I were your father—or the son of your father. As it is—as I happen to be a man of honor—I can do nothing with you. You will notice that I am now perfectly cool. My threats of punishment were

made in the heat of a quite excusable fit of temper. As a liar, you are even more barefaced than your precious father ever was. I warn you, young man, that if I ever see you on my land again, I'll shoot you like a dog, though I hang for it."

"You mention my father very freely," said Archie. "What do you know of him? I had no idea he had any acquaintances in the backwoods."

"I knew him to my cost. I have not always lived on the Blue Bend," replied the old man.

"I don't see how you can have the hardihood to judge any man," said Archie, "after the way you have lied about me."

"You fool!" cried the chief, his eyes suddenly flaming again. "I had the check in my hand this very morning, indorsed by you, and paid by the bank. And you dare look me in the eye and deny it! Damn you, I—I shall lose my temper again, if you keep up this farce. I warn you!"

"What is your object in lying to me?" asked Archie. "You lied to Miss Morgan for a purpose, and she believed you; but why keep it up with me? I quite agree with her opinion that you are mentally deranged."

The chief came near choking with rage. For a minute he could not find words with which to express his emotions. He raved furiously about the room, flailing the air with his right arm, absolutely mastered by his passion. Twice he paused beside the couch and swung back his fist as if to strike the defenseless man in the face. Archie did not flinch. Morgan found his voice at last.

"You've gone too far!" he cried. "I warned you, you young fool. Now you'll have a chance to cool your heels for a few days—and your vile tongue. You'll be my guest—in the cellar—until you apologize for every word you have said to me."

Archie made no retort to this. He was now convinced that the old man was insane. He realized, perhaps too late, that the less said the better. He even turned his eyes away from the frantic ancient, for fear that his glance alone might continue to fan the flames. Morgan went to a door at the far end of the room, stooped and listened at the keyhole for a moment. Evidently satisfied with the investigation, he took a key down from a bookshelf and unlocked the door noiselessly. He opened

it and looked cautiously out. Evidently satisfied that the way was clear, he returned to MacElroy, lifted him in his arms, and staggered from the room with him. It was easily seen that the old giant was feeling his age in his knees. It is where most big men weaken first. He lowered Archie to the floor of a narrow passage and closed and locked the door behind him. He stooped again, lifted the captive by the shoulders, and backed along the passage with him, letting his heels drag on the floor.

Archie thought of shouting, then thought better of it. He was experiencing a new sensation—that of fear. Here was a madman and here he was, bound at hands and feet! He was afraid to cry out for help. The chances of obtaining help in that house were not worth the risk. So he kept quiet, hoping that the chief's temper might soon cool itself for want of opposition. Again he was laid flat on the floor. A door was unlocked and opened behind him, and a cool and dampish breath of air touched him. Again his shoulders were lifted. He heard the chief's large feet scuffling uncertainly. The steep slant at which he was held became less steep. The cool, damp air surrounded

him and the light grew dim. His heels dragged, bumping, from step to step.

"It's down cellar for you, my fine fellow," said the old man, and MacElroy's heart chilled at the words.

The cellar of the big house was large and fairly dry. It was not well lighted. Thin shafts of daylight entered the low windows set along the top of the foundation wall at long intervals. The space was broken by posts, short inner walls, the ugly bulk of a huge furnace, casks and piles of wood, bins of potatoes and empty barrels. The old man deposited his captive in a corner near the stairs, down which he had brought him, on a wide plank. There he let him lie, glared at him for a second or two, then retired up the stairs. Archie heard him open and shut the door and lock it. Archie rolled over, got his knees under him, and set out on a slow and painful crawl around the cellar. It was hard work, and he was forced to rest frequently. He had been engaged in this way for about twenty minutes when he was startled by the muffled report of a revolver.

He knelt against a post and listened, with thump-

ing heart. After a brief silence a key cried in a lock, a door flew open with a bang, and a shaft of light fell at his feet. He saw that he was near the foot of a flight of wooden steps, and not the same steps by which he had been brought to the cellar. Some one came down in two jumps. It was Andy Flemming, hatless, with a revolver in his hand.

"Here I am," said MacElroy. "I'm still tied up."

Andy turned and sprang to his side, cut the ropes at wrists and ankles in two seconds, and helped him to his feet. He peered anxiously into the other's face, which was pale.

"Hurt any?" he asked.

"Fit as a fiddle. A bit stiff and sore, that's all," replied Archie.

"Then come along!" cried the guide. "We got to cut for it. Follow me. Some of them cussed Injuns'll be around in a minute."

Andy led the way up the stairs and into a large kitchen. Jessie Morgan and two Indian women stood near the door. Miss Morgan's face was as white as paper. Her eyes searched MacElroy's

face as he appeared, blinking and staggering, from the gloom below. She put out a hand and caught at his sleeve. He jerked his arm away and passed her without a glance. She made a quick step after him as he crossed the kitchen at the heels of his guide, but he did not turn his head or pause.

"Are you hurt?" she cried.

MacElroy went on without a word or a glance, sick at heart with a pain he did not understand. Next moment they were out of the house and in a wide yard. Andy turned, grabbed his companion's right hand in his left and began to run. They were soon across the yard and in the shelter of the spruces. Here Archie tripped and fell. He scrambled to his feet, only to fall again. He lay still and smiled wanly.

"They pulled me about," he exclaimed. "That old man is mad."

"Mad as hell, I guess," agreed Andy. "Where're ye hurt, boss? Head? Legs? Whereabouts? Wish I'd soaked it to him harder when I was at it."

"Nowhere in particular," replied Archie faintly. "I'll be right in a minute. Have you the flask on you?"

The woodsman produced a fat flask from his hip-pocket, removed the silver cap and poured a generous dose of brandy between Archie's lips. Half a minute later Archie was on his feet again.

"Have they found the canoe?" he asked.

"Not as I know of, but come along, if ye can. I'll tell ye about it when we git farther away from this here blasted house. I don't like it. Reckon it must be a private bug-house. This way, boss."

They made a wide *détour* through the woods and at last reached the river at a point below the place where they had landed and hidden their canoe. They moved up-stream, crawling cautiously among the tangled alders. In the tall, coarse grass and matted brush they found the canoe and provisions safe and untouched. Archie sank beside the canoe and refreshed himself again from the flask. He was weak and sore, in spirit as in body. His head ached and his heart was like stone. The brandy eased a craving of the stomach and cleared his head a little. But he indulged in only a sip or two, sitting in the tangle with his shoulders against the bottom of the upturned canoe.

Andy Flemming, in the meantime, had crept out

to the strip of open shore to see if the way of escape was clear. He soon came back, breasting his way fearlessly through the brush, with word that no one was in sight. So they carried the canoe and outfit down to the edge of the stream, launched the canoe, freighted her and slipped away. Andy took the stern, and Archie sat facing him at his ease, with his shoulders against the middle bar and blankets under him. The slim craft slid swiftly along with the brown current at the urge of the guide's broad paddle. All was quiet astern. Archie closed his eyes and sighed.

"We're well out of that bees' nest," remarked the guide, with conviction in his voice. "If it hadn't bin for that girl ye'd hev bin there yet, I guess, an' me still lookin' for ye. It was her that found me an' told me how ye'd bin caught an' toted up to the house and hid down cellar. It was her helped me tie up the old man, and loaned me the pistol. By thunder, I've brought her pistol away with us!"

MacElroy opened his eyes and looked at Andy with interest.

"What girl are you talking about?" he asked.

"Yer friend, sir. The young lady. The one ye come to see."

"She's no more a friend of mine than old Morgan is."

Andy looked bewildered.

"She acted like one, anyhow," he said. "She come runnin' down here, fair bustin' for breath, an' said she was scart the old man had gone off his nut and was killin' ye, for sure. An' she put this dinky little pistol into my fist, an' grabbed my other hand and run like a deer, a towin' me along behind her. She was scart, an' no mistake.

"She told me, in puffs, how the old gent had lugged ye down cellar, and how he hated ye like pizen for somethin' she couldn't get the rights of, an' how the two of ye was fair blisterin' the air with callin' each other liars, when she last heard ye. She led me by short cuts to the house, an' in by the back door, an' unlocked the cellar-door for me. Ye'd be there now, boss, maybe dead, but for that young lady. She's a peach and no mistake."

MacElroy smiled grimly and shook his head. He drew his cigarettes from his pocket and lit one.

"I wonder why they didn't rob me," he said. And then: "I'm not surprised to hear that she was frightened. No young woman cares to be implicated in a murder case. Her fear was of the head rather than of the heart, I'll bet ten dollars. Well, they're a hard lot, those Morgans! I've had about enough of them. Whether or not the old fellow was crazy enough to kill me I can't say, but I'm mighty thankful to you, Andy, for getting me out of that cellar when you did. But you haven't told me what you did to Morgan. I heard a shot. Hope you didn't kill him."

"Ye're all wrong about that girl," replied Andy. "She's white."

"Confound the girl!" exclaimed MacElroy. "Tell me what you did to Morgan. I know all I want to about Miss Morgan."

"Well, sir, she give me the pistol and guided me to the house. She took me to the chief before she showed me the way down cellar. She was particular to ask me not to kill him. So when I got into the room with him, an' he come runnin' at me like a bull moose at a sport from the city—in the sport's dreams—I left fly a shot past his

whiskers, just to rattle him a bit. It done the work an' then I hit him a biff an' closed with him. I got him down easy enough an' the young lady helped me tie him up. We tied his head in a sofa-cushion an' then we tied him to the sofa. She had the rope all handy for me. When last I seen him he was on the floor, with the sofa pillow on top of him. Then she let me down cellar and there I found ye. That's all."

Archie was silent for several minutes. He smoked his cigarette reflectively.

"Morgan says that he used to know my father," he said. "Perhaps he did, but he's such a shameless liar that it's even chances he didn't. Anyway, I must go back to town. If the man is insane he should be properly looked after. He'll be murdering some one some fine day."

"Maybe he's cracked," replied Andy, "but I never heard as how he's a liar. He's got the name in these parts of standin' to his word."

"He's a liar and a beast," returned MacElroy sharply. "You can take my word for it. The place for him is either a jail or a lunatic asylum."

"But ye wouldn't go to the lawyers about him,

or to the police, would ye?" queried the guide anxiously. "He'll never hurt ye again, if ye don't trouble him. Let him alone, say I."

"Why do you champion him? Is he a friend of yours?"

Andy Flemming shook his head and looked confused.

"Then why are you defending him?"

"I ain't defendin' him. T'ell with him! But ye wouldn't go an' make trouble for that girl, would ye—and her the very person who got ye out of the old gent's hands? 'Tain't sportin', boss, if ye'll excuse me."

Archie smiled queerly and gazed quizzically at the other.

"Have it your own way," he said. "I'll not report Morgan to the authorities, but I tell you, the young woman is no more to be trusted than the old man, though I'll admit that she can be very charming and attractive when she tries. She fooled me."

"Sure, I seen that," replied Andy, "and maybe she didn't treat ye just as ye was expectin' this

trip, but I wouldn't hold that up ag'in' her, if I was you. She means ye no harm, I'll swear."

"Let it go at that," said Archie fretfully. "Drop it, Andy."

So they talked of other things as they continued to glide down the sinewy-current of the Blue Bend. Hungry as they were, they did not venture to go ashore and cook a belated dinner until they were in the main river and on the farther shore. It was well for them that they were cautious, for the old chief was after them.

Ten minutes after Archie and his guide had made their escape from the house, Miss Morgan returned to the library where she had left the old man tied to the sofa and gagged with a sofa-cushion. She found her mother already there, in a silent storm of tears and terror, trying to untie the chief from his fastenings. The chief lay on the floor, kicking, with the heavy sofa on top of him.

Mrs. Percy Morgan, a small, middle-aged person with a mild pink and white face and mild blue eyes, seemed unequal to the task. Fear and respect for the big old man under the sofa, curs-

ing muffled oaths into the cushion, unnerved her mind and fingers. She had always stood in awe of Archibald Morgan, her husband's second cousin once removed (or something of the kind) for his personal qualities, his wealth, his position as the head of the important though scattered family of Morgan. He had always been generous to her somewhat shiftless and unfortunate husband, and since her husband's death he had supported Jessie and herself. For years the two had lived in Europe on the big man's bounty. Jessie was named in his will for considerable property in land and money; in fact, she was to have everything he owned with the exception of the family seat in England and small places in Wales and Scotland.

This fine property on the Blue Bend was to be Jessie's, unless the old man changed his mind and his will. His treatment of the helpless widow of his second cousin once removed had always been a model of lofty kindness. It is not to be wondered at that she greatly respected him and stood greatly in awe of him. His manner toward her ran nicely between that of an indulgent uncle and a trusty but preoccupied cousin, with something

of the heavy guardian thrown in for good measure. His attitude toward Jessie was different and varied. The fact is, he and Jessie were either playing together like good children or fighting like bad cats and dogs. On an average of once a week, he vowed that he'd change his will and cut the girl out of it entirely; and, once a week, Jessie told him to go ahead with his cutting; and once a week the poor widow felt sure that he really meant it this time and retired to her room with a sick headache.

"Let me do that, mother," said Jessie, and she soon had the old man out from under the sofa and untied. He glared at her, flaming and bristling, the cushion still dangling at his neck.

"This ends it," he roared. "You'll never have a dollar of mine!"

"I did it for your own good. I do not want to see you hung for murder," replied the girl fearlessly.

"I'll catch them yet. I'll murder them yet," cried the chief. "I'll loose the whole village at their heels, armed with guns."

"You must be really mad—this time," said Jessie.

The old man turned from her and dashed out of the room, and out of the house, shouting at the top of his voice. Ten minutes later every man and boy on the reservation was out, searching the woods and the banks of the river for the fugitives. Old Noel Sacobie caught sight of the canoe rounding a bend far away, but he was a cautious old man, all for a peaceful life, and so did not report it.

Old Morgan's anger against Jessie cooled down before the hour of the evening dinner, and after dinner he was playing chess with her as politely as you please, his eyes and brow as bland as a bishop's, his white beard hanging limply and amiably down his face. But deep in his heart he continued to nurse his anger against the son of Captain Ian MacElroy.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE TROUBLE

Mr. William Flint, the Scott Act Inspector whose personal tastes clashed so wofully with the nature of his official duties, was highly pleased with the result of his interview with Jim Samson. He was delighted with his own shrewdness and this proof of his power over his fellow man. He had found the woodsman even easier than he had expected. Now he would soon have his enemy, Hedley Bean, by the heels, at one and the same time satisfy a personal grudge, perform a service to the public, and pave the way for promotion.

At first he was determined to have Samson accompany him on this expedition after the peddler and the hidden stores of liquor; but the simple woodsman was like flint against that suggestion and frankly confessed that he feared old Bean more than the devil himself. There might have been trouble between the two conspirators if Mrs.

Samson had not produced an unopened bottle of gin from the cellar at the critical moment. Mr. Flint accepted this attention as a guest and a gentleman, not as an officer of the provincial government; he smoothed himself out with a glass or two, and waived the point.

He set out alone, in the cool of the afternoon, with a revolver in his pocket and Jim's instructions clear in his mind. Mr. Flint found first of the hidden stores of Mister Was without difficulty, in the roof of a deserted lumber camp. He laid them out on a stationary table which still occupied one end of the shack, and sampled one of the jugs. He produced a note-book and in it made a correct inventory of the goods, with a note as to where and when the goods were found and to the effect that they had been immediately destroyed by the finder, with the exception of one jug of whisky and one bottle of gin. These were preserved as proof of the discovery. He returned the note book to his pocket and heartened himself with another swig from the uncorked bottle. He then hunted about in the corners of the camp until he unearthed a number of empty pickle bottles, catsup bottles,

whisky, gin and vinegar bottles, two broken jugs which had contained molasses in their day, and a dozen jam jars. He smashed these to jagged fragments and heaped them in the middle of the floor.

If any one should want to investigate the scene of destruction, he'd be welcome to do so. The evening was now drawing on and the air was chilly in that high country. So Flint put on his overcoat and stuffed bottles in every pocket. He placed one jug and one bottle on the floor, then went out of the shack and explored the stables and deserted clearing.

In the middle of a tangle of wild raspberry-bushes he found a suitable hollow. To this he carried all the bottles and jugs except those which he had put in his pockets and set aside for use in the case against the peddler. He covered the transferred store of liquors with moss and bark and a few lengths of half-rotted wood. Dusk was now falling, so he set out for Jim's with bulging pockets and a swelling of heart, and the heavy jug in his right hand. He had done a good day's work. He would do another on the morrow. In time—all in good time—he would find the whisky peddler

himself. It was late and almost dark by the time he arrived at the house. He was feeling brave and capable, and yet as cunning as a fox. The peddler might be inside. He swung the jug from his right hand to his left and produced his revolver. Before entering the house he made his way cautiously around it, peeping into every window. The coast was clear. He entered, laden with his loot, and found that Mrs. Samson had kept his supper hot for him on the back of the stove.

When Mr. Flint awoke next morning he felt no immediate ambition to continue his search for Hedley Bean's unlawful deposits. He wanted to moisten his dry throat and go to sleep again. But Jim Samson was not of the same mind. Jim was eager for the inspector to be finished with his work so that he, Jim, might fly the country with his family and poor furniture. He was afraid that Bean might discover the loss of the liquor from the deserted camp and guess how it had come about that Mr. Flint had found it. He had no idea where the peddler was at the moment. He might be fifty miles down stream or lurking in the woods three miles away.

All Jim knew of him was that he and the gray mare had gone away. He was horribly afraid that they might appear again at any moment. He felt that Bean would read the secret of the treachery in a single glance. Every sound on the road caused him to look up, with a faintness about the heart and a burning of the throat, in sickening expectation of seeing the old gray mare, the battered wagon, the brown-faced, round-eyed old man humped on the seat and waiting, in a terrible silence, for some one to lower the bars so that he might drive into the stumpy clearing. This is the way Jim Samson felt; so he ventured to try to get Mr. Flint out of bed and away about his business. Failing in this, he asked the inspector to pay him his promised reward now and give him the letter of introduction to the employer in the big city. Flint swore huskily and opened one bloodshot eye.

"No hurry," he said. "Plenty time. Gotter find all that liquor before I pay you. Ain't that what I said? Sure. Gimme that bottle."

Jim Samson stood motionless for a long minute beside the untidy bed in that stuffy room, trying desperately to fix his attention on one of two

courses. Would he say that the bottle on the washstand was empty, and then fetch another containing water slightly flavored, so that the fellow would come to his senses the sooner and get to work, or would he let him drink his fill, even to unconsciousness, and then do what he considered to be wisest and safest for his own interests? He, Jim, had already fulfilled his share of the conditions of the agreement. He felt decidedly uncertain about Flint. He made his choice, and passed the bottle to the man on the bed. Then he went outside and waited. He lit his pipe and smoked, keeping a calculating eye on the house and a terrified one on the road. The day promised to be fine.

After twenty minutes of nervous inaction he went to the stable, gave the inspector's horse some hay and his own a generous feed of oats. Returning to the house he went softly to Flint's room. To his dismay he found his guest seated on the edge of the bed, half dressed, lacing his boots. He shot an inquiring glance at the bottle. Its contents had not lowered by more than half an inch during his absence.

Flint raised a red face to him and swore.

"Tell yer wife to make me some fresh tea," he said. "Holler to her. Then tie these blasted boots for me and git me a pail of good cold water. I'll be out after the rest of the stuff inside fifteen minutes. If Bean comes along when I'm gone ye kin shoot him, for all I care. Now step lively—and earn yer money."

Half an hour later Flint took his departure. The Samsons were left alone. Jim did not know whether to feel joy or sorrow at having been foiled in his desperate plan. But for his soul-racking fear of Hedley Bean—his fear of the old man's momentary arrival—he would have felt a keen relief. As it was, he was more afraid of the old peddler than of crime itself. He said nothing of his fear or his foiled plan to his wife, but took his ax and went into the woods on the other side of the road. From a high vantage point on the hillside he watched the rising and dipping road for miles in both directions.

Mr. Flint had a hard day in the woods, found only one more of the peddler's secret stores, then got himself lost. He was in a very bad temper when he returned to the clearing at twilight. He

was very hungry, but not in the least thirsty. Bean had not appeared. Flint refused to leave the house on the following day, and he refused to become unconscious. It was a trying day for Jim Samson. But the peddler gave no sign of existence. Four more days and nights passed without sight or sound of the peddler. On the fifth day Flint found and disposed of the last hidden store of bottles.

"Now all I've got to do is capture the old skunk himself," he said. "I'll put the handcuffs onto him and take him in to town—an' then I'm made. I'll git promotion, sure's blazes."

"An' when'll ye be payin' me what ye promised, an' givin' me that letter to the gent in St. John?" Jim ventured to ask timidly.

"As soon as I git holt of Bean," replied the inspector.

"But it wasn't for Bean ye was to pay me," protested Jim nervously. "It was for tellin' ye where the stuff was hid. An' ye've found all the stuff. That's what ye promised me, Mr. Flint, word for word."

"Don't I know my own words?" retorted Flint. "But we'll not fall out about a little thing like

that, Jim. I'm a free-handed man with my money, I am. You just tell me the likeliest place to find that old pirate, an' I'll put another fifty to yer reward."

Poor Samson's heart sank within him. He saw that the big inspector meant to do him out of the reward. As to knowing the whereabouts of the peddler—well, he knew nothing. However, he had sense enough not to say so. His mild eyes roved about the humble barnyard. He leaned forward to Flint.

"I reckon he's maybe hangin' round the Indian reservation on the Blue Bend, foolin' old Morgan an' dolin' out the stuff to the bucks and squaws," he whispered. "It's a trick he does 'most every year, after fixin' up the drives. He often hangs round the reservation for two weeks or more, selling when he can, for he's got to keep out of Morgan's sight, an' he's got to collect the price for every single drink before he hands it over. So it takes him quite a spell to do business there."

There was a seed of truth in all this. The peddler had tried to sell liquor to the tribesmen on the Blue Bend on two or three occasions during the

past eight years, and had been roughly handled by Chief Morgan.

"We'll go to-morrow," said Flint. "If I kin catch Mister Was sellin' to the Injuns it'll be all up with him. An' maybe old Morgan will lend me a hand. We'll start early, Jim."

Four hours later Mr. Flint went to bed. The start was made at nine o'clock, in Jim's boat, with Mr. Flint in very soggy condition. It was a hard trip with the heavy boat and only one man to work. It was night when they landed near the reservation.

"Ye'd best go right up to the big house, Mr. Flint, an' tell him who ye're after," said Samson. "He'll help ye corner Bean. He hates him. He'll treat ye right, too, for he's death on rum among the Injuns. I'll wait right here with the boat until ye send word to me if we'll be stoppin' all night or not."

Mr. Flint got heavily out of the boat and moved slowly away in the dark. Jim waited five minutes, breathing quickly and noisily. He heard a dog bark. He sank the blade of an oar silently into the mud and pushed the boat away from the

shore. He swung her head down stream and breathed more quietly. He rowed easily, for the swift current raced the boat along. Three times he lit a match and examined something in his pocket, just to make sure of it. He chuckled each time he found it there and safe. It was after midnight when he reached his own shore on the big river. He tied the boat and hurried up the bank. The kitchen door stood open and bright. The wife and children had not gone to bed. The horse was harnessed, the wagon loaded.

He ate a hasty supper. They talked in excited whispers. Twenty minutes later they were on the road. The house stood black and locked behind them, and empty save for a few cheap sticks of furniture, the cracked cooking stove, the poor beds. The inspector's horse wandered uneasily about the stumpy clearing. Jim felt a glow in his heart and a comforting lump against his ribs whenever he pressed his hand to the breast of his coat.

"We're fixed all right now, so long's we don't happen to run into old Hedley Bean," he whispered to his wife.

The horse jogged slowly along the narrow road,

the lantern on the dashboard advanced a yellow, feeble illumination upon rock and rut and wayside tree, and the children slept among blankets and bundles in the back of the wagon. But I may not follow these fugitives along the midnight track. Even if I did so I should not have far to go.

To return to Mr. Flint and his mission to the reservation on the Blue Bend. He was exceedingly crafty in his advance. It would never do, he reasoned, to let the Indians know of his arrival, for they would immediately guess his intentions and warn the old peddler. He must get to the big house without alarming the red men. To do this he must go around the village instead of through it. That would be more trouble, of course; but the courageous fellow saw his duty clear. He heartened himself for the task with a swig from a bottle, then edged to the right and commenced forcing his way through the alders and young spruces. He found it hard going, fell frequently and made as much noise as a cow. In fact, it was for a cow that Noel Sacobie's dog mistook him, after barking once. The inspector floundered deeper and deeper into the bush, keeping his course by good

luck rather than good management. He was in no condition for violent exercise.

It was not long before the underbrush took on the density of a tropical jungle to his weary limbs, scratched face, and fevered mind. He cursed heartily, then essayed to climb a small spruce that he might look beyond the tops of the jungle for the lights of Morgan's house. He seemed a mighty hero to himself as he scrambled up the slim, well-branched stem of the tree, grunting heavily at every six inches of gain. He thought hazily of himself as a great detective—as a human bloodhound with a brain as well as a nose.

It would have been better for him if he had kept his hazy thoughts strictly on the job in hand. The soles of his boots were twelve feet from the ground when they slipped from a bending branch. His hands lost their grip next moment; and, with a grunt of terror, he fell outward and backward and down through the tops of the twisted underbrush to the ground. He lay on his back, with his legs hung across an alder, and in time began to feel astonishment at finding himself alive. Later

he was still more astonished to find himself unhurt.

The chief had played two games of chess with Jessie, and now he was smoking a cigar on the lower terrace and pacing back and forth. He was hatless. He held a heavy walking-stick in his right hand. He halted suddenly and listened intently for several seconds, stooping his white head a little and turning it. The night was one of gloom and blackness. There was no moon. The stars were hidden by a high veil of cloud. There was no wind. The chief dropped his half-smoked cigar to the damp sward and set his heel upon the red coal. He walked noiselessly to the end of the terrace and down the slope of it to the shrub-dotted lawn. There he halted again, listening, then advanced toward the heavy, looming blacker gloom of the edge of the forest.

He reversed the stick in his right hand. He stood straight and alert beside a tall bush with clusters of white blooms which shone pallid in the dark. The sounds to which he had been listening drew nearer and nearer. A figure appeared within

six feet of him, vague and black. He took one swift and stealthy pace forward and raised himself on his toes.

"I warned you, young man," he said. "On your own head be it!"

The trespasser uttered a sharp yelp of terror and astonishment, for his nerves were shaken, and he still fancied himself to be in the heart of the wood. Next instant he grunted and reeled to earth. Morgan lit a match and bent over the huddled figure. The broken hat had jumped from the head at the blow of the stick and rolled aside. The puffed red face was fully exposed to the feeble flame of the match.

"Confound it all!" exclaimed the chief. "It's not the same man!"

CHAPTER IX

MR. FLINT GETS A FREE PASSAGE

Old Chief Morgan had struck Mr. Flint in the right spot—from the chief's point of view. And yet now, finding the unconscious man to be an absolute stranger to him, Morgan was not so sure of it. He felt the inspector's heart, and was relieved to find it jogging along with what seemed to him normal force beneath a soiled cotton shirt and a woolen "linder." But he could not deny that the fellow was unconscious and already displayed an imposing and ever increasing lump on the side of his head. The chief picked up the broken "bean-bouncer" hat and examined it by the light of a second match.

"His hat saved him," he muttered. "What a rotten kind of hat to wear in the woods! He deserves to have it broken—and his head bumped into the bargain. A friend of young MacElroy's, I'll swear!"

He was satisfied in his mind that this man was a confederate of Archie MacElroy's, though not the one who had exploded a revolver beside his ear and then bound and tied him to his own sofa. He tried to lift the unconscious man in his arms, but found Mr. Flint's weight too much for his strength. So he took him by the shoulders and, pausing frequently to rest, dragged him across the lawn, up the slope of the first terrace, and then up the second. He then scouted ahead into the house. The ladies had retired. He sent a servant, young Joe Paul, down to the village to bring Noel Sacobie. After a deal of pulling and hoisting he got the inspector to his library.

"By the smell of him he doesn't need spirits," he muttered; so he revived the fellow by pouring cold water down his throat and over his face, head, and neck. The man opened his eyes at last, with a groan; and Noel Sacobie entered the room at the same moment, with his weather-stained hat on his head and his noiseless moccasins on his feet. A good Maliseet will only remove his hat from his head in church—and Noel was a chief. Noel respected Morgan greatly, and gladly accepted of his

bounty; but, after all, Morgan was only his brother—his rich, white brother. Now he stood beside the chief and looked down at the wet, bewildered person on the floor with inscrutable eyes and mask-like face. Chief Morgan glanced up at him.

“Did you ever see this man before, Noel Sacobie?” he asked.

The Maliseet nodded, stepped back a pace, and drew Morgan with him by the elbow. He continued to back away from the man on the floor, and still he drew Morgan along with him. The man on the floor could see nothing of this, for he lay with the top of his head toward them. It is doubtful if he could have seen them, even if he had faced them, for his eyes were full of water and the dust of that knock on the head. Noel Sacobie drew Chief Morgan into the hall and softly closed the door of the library.

“What’s the matter with you?” demanded the tall old man.

“Him Bill Flint, Scott Act spy,” said Noel. “What for you hit ’im?”

“Bill Flint?” queried Morgan. “I know nothing of Bill Flint. I’ve read of a pirate by the name

of Flint—and I'll venture to say he was a beauty compared to this hound. If he's a Scott Act spy, as you call it, what was he sneaking around this house for in the middle of the night? He'd better look after Hedley Bean?"

"I dunno," replied Noel Sacobie. "Dat's Bill Flint, anyhow."

"So? Then what was he sneaking around here for at this time of night? Does he think I'm engaged in selling whisky? Confound him!"

"Dunno. Big policeman, Bill Flint, anyhow. Maybe look for Bean."

"Bean? Nonsense. Hedley Bean is afraid to come within five miles of me. That little cad of a whisky peddler is afraid of me down to the very marrow of his bones. No, this fellow was after something else."

"Maybe so. Scott Act spy and policeman, anyhow. You better no let him t'ink who hit him on the head. You bet. He don't see you, hey? Good. You git me one big blanket an' some rope, Morgan, an' me take him away."

Chief Morgan knew Noel Sacobie to be a wise and cunning man, so he fetched him a blanket and

a couple of lengths of clothes line. Noel took the blanket and opened the door a crack. The inspector was sitting up, with his back to the door. Sacobie crawled into the room, dragging the blanket. Chief Morgan followed, also on his hands and knees. They crept noiselessly over the thick rugs, crouching low. Suddenly Noel arose to his feet, extended the blanket in both hands, and threw it over Mr. Flint's head and shoulders. In twenty seconds the inspector was gagged and bound. Twenty minutes later he was stowed comfortably away in Noel Sacobie's canoe.

Mr. Flint slept. The fumes of his prolonged potations and the blow on the head made for deep and lengthy slumber. And he dreamed, though he was not accustomed to dreams. The crack of the old chief's stick must have excited his imagination. He suffered some remarkable dreams, grotesque but vivid.

A sense of terrible cold and discomfort awoke him at last, and he opened his heavy eyes to find himself in utter darkness. Horror seized him. He shouted, as one shouts in a nightmare, and his voice seemed to beat back upon his face and die upon

his lips. He raised two stiff arms and clawed at the dark before his eyes. His fingers encountered a dew-wet blanket. He clutched desperately at it and began to pull. At last he got the sodden blanket clear of his head and face. The nightmare dark withdrew with the blanket. He lay on his back, blinking and gasping. A chill breath of air, smelling of moss, and running water and wet, cold spruce-tops crept across his face and eyes, soothing and reviving him like a tonic.

Even summer dawns are often cold on the upper St. John. Above him hung a clear sky, gray but bright, tinged with a promise of blue and gold. His limbs were stiff with cold, but unbound. He shifted his position a little, and his feet and hands tingled. His eyes smarted, and his neck and head ached. Where was he? And why? His dreams were brighter in his mind than any memories, for he was not used to dreams. He sat up at last; but his head spun so sickeningly that he slumped down again on the flat of his back. He moved his legs and arms cautiously until the blood quickened in them. Presently he sat up again, very slowly, and looked painfully at the sliding river and the

hills of spruce beyond. Drifts of white mist trailed on the black surface of the river. He knew it was early morning.

With a painful effort he turned his sore head on his sore neck and saw that he was on Jim Samson's front. This was bewildering. He could make nothing of it. Where was Jim? Where was Jim's boat? He lay down again and tried to sift memories of actual events from his dreams. The trip up to the reservation on the Blue Bend, with Jim, came back to him hazily. His adventurous scramble through the black woods alone also returned to his dizzily questing mind. He had reached an open place, in sight of the big house, when some unseen person had spoken to him. Yes, that was right. He'd been startled. Then something quick and painful had happened to him. What? He raised his hand to his head and felt a huge lump on the side of it that burned like a gigantic boil beneath the light touch of his fingers. He had been hit on the head! He could not doubt that. Some one had clubbed him.

Of his brief and dazed vision of the ill-lit library his mind held nothing. The person who had

spoken to him had hit him; but who was that person? The old peddler, of course. Who else would venture to hit Mr. William Flint over the head? But when was that—last night, or the night before last, or a week ago? He hadn't the faintest notion. And what had become of Jim Samson, the informer?

He crawled down to the river, from which the night mist was quickly thinning and lifting, lay flat on the damp mud and cold pebbles, and drank deep. Then he sank his face and wrists into the cold water. He was still too weak and dazed for anger. He bathed the lump on the side of his head until some of the ache went out of it. In time when the sun was above the eastern hills and all the mist had vanished from the river, he staggered up the path to Samson's clearing. The little barn and house, the chip-yard, hen-yard, and stumpy clearing looked wonderfully clean and homely in the fresh morning light. Holding to a willow for support, he raised his eyes to the chimney of the house. No smoke ascended from it. But perhaps it was earlier than it looked, and Mrs. Samson was not yet out of bed. The next thing that caught

his eye was his own horse wandering desolately about the stumpy clearing.

"Turned him out, did he?" he cried thickly but indignantly. "I'll learn the skunk to turn my horse out of the stall. Darn him, I didn't think he had the courage! An' he ain't got the courage! No, by the jumpin' thunder, he ain't! Nor the woman wouldn't do it, neither. Something's wrong. Where's the farm wagon? And where's the chickens?"

He made his way to the kitchen door. It was locked. He picked up a stick of stove wood and hammered upon the door. Echoes ran thumping through the house. He went across to the stables, and found them empty. He sat down and tried to think, feeling an uneasiness that almost amounted to fear. The result of this thinking was this: Hedley Bean had ambushed him and hit him over the head. Jim Samson had heard of this, somehow or other, and in terror of the old peddler had fled from his home. This was the way of it, beyond a doubt. He felt something of the same terror that must have driven Samson away, bag and family. He began to feel through his pockets for a

flask or a bottle, sure that he would find one or the other somewhere, as an ordinary man would feel for a match. But he found nothing of the kind.

With his hand deep in an inner breast-pocket of his inner coat, a change came over his face. The crude coloring went out of it, leaving it gray and mottled. His lower jaw dropped. His eyes seemed to protrude more than ever and took on a fishy surface glimmer. He withdrew his hand and looked at it. It contained nothing but a few old letters. He swallowed hard and licked his lips. After a few seconds of inaction, during which he seemed to suffer a slight attack of paralysis, he searched feverishly, frantically, through all the pockets of both his coats. He even ripped the linings of the coats. But his search was fruitless. Bean had not only hit him over the head with a club, but had robbed him of his fat wallet.

Mr. Flint hunted aimlessly about until he found an ax. With this he broke open the door of the kitchen. The stove was there, but most of the pots and pans were gone. He went from room to room. The quilts and blankets were gone from the beds.

All the food, except a few handfuls of flour in the bottom of a barrel, was gone. The Samsons had not taken their departure in a desperate hurry, evidently; and evidently they had gone to stay. In the bedroom that had been his he found a torn straw tick on the bare floor. Overcome by his recent efforts and the dull pain in his head, he lay down and sank into a heavy sleep. And there we must leave him while we go down river to the little city with Archie MacElroy.

On the homeward run Andy Flemming found Archie a dull companion. Andy made several attempts to talk of Miss Jessie Morgan and excuse her treatment of Archie; but he was snapped into silence every time. The boss was certainly in a beastly temper. It is a bitter thing for an honorable young man to be treated as a crook by anyone—and the bitterness is as wormwood and gall when the treatment is received at the hands of a girl like Jessie Morgan. That sort of thing takes the self-conceit out of a man, young or old. All men like to be well thought of by women—even those who don't know that they like it. Archie knew it now, though he had never thought of it

particularly before. His brief and stormy acquaintance with Miss Morgan had taught him several fundamental truths. He felt an ache which he could not understand and a deep resentment which he could. He tried to put Jessie Morgan out of his mind, and failed dismally. He thought of her as he had first seen her and as he had last seen her. Like most men, he had always given women credit for fine discernment in regard to character. And this woman believed him to be a liar. He had liked her, too—at first. She was pretty. Oh, he had been properly fooled!

“I’ll prove to her that she is wrong; and after that I’ll never want to see her again,” he reflected.

He did not care what Chief Morgan thought of him. The old man was mad, beyond a doubt. Even the girl admitted that. He wondered why the chief’s insanity took the form of this violent hatred of his father and himself. Why had the old man taken the trouble to invent the story of the check? Archie parted with his guide at the riverside village in which Andy lived when he happened to be at home.

“I’ll write you in a day or two,” said Archie.

"I expect to cruise timber on the headwaters of the Blue Bend for Marsh & West, and will want you along with me. Will you come?"

"Sure thing," replied Andy. "I ain't lookin' for trouble—an' I ain't runnin' away from it, neither."

"What are you driving at?" asked MacElroy.

Andy Flemming winked and held his peace. Archie let it go at that, and climbed aboard the little freight train which had its meaningless termination in that secluded hamlet. He was alone in the one rough passenger car. In spite of the lurches and jerks of the little train over the perilous road-bed, and the hardness of the seats, he nodded and dozed. At last, wedged crookedly in the corner of one seat, with his legs on the seat opposite, he slept. He did not dream, but an unheralded thought flashed suddenly into his relaxed brain. It was a monstrous thought, and had to do with the mystery of Chief Morgan's violent assertions concerning the check for five hundred dollars. The human mind will breed thoughts during slumber which it would unconsciously kill in the germ when awake. Awake, a man permits no subject for thought to approach his mind unchallenged; asleep,

the sentries are withdrawn and the mind sometimes grinds a few measures of corn on its own account. The shock of the thought which had come into being in Archie's brain while he slept awoke him in a flash. He sat up and shivered.

"It could not be," he reflected passionately, yet miserably. "He would not stoop as low as that. Old Morgan is a liar."

But he did not sleep again. He could not get that terrifying thought out of his head. It changed from a thought originated during slumber to humiliating suspicion entertained when awake.

Two hours later the little train drew into the junction. Archie got out with his dunnage-bag and spent the remainder of the night in his blankets on the floor of the waiting-room. There was no hotel at that junction. By seven in the morning he was aboard another and larger train, and by nine o'clock he was in the city. Archie found his father at breakfast. For a moment the captain looked somewhat startled and disconcerted at the sight of his son in the doorway of the dining-room. Then his haggard face was twisted into what was

intended for a welcoming smile. He waved a slender hand.

"You're soon back from your fishing, my boy; but I'm very glad to see you," he said. "Forgive me for not getting up, but my game leg is a trifle out of order this morning."

"Don't mention it, sir," replied Archie unsmilingly. "I'm sorry to hear that your leg is bothering you. I'll run upstairs and wash and join you in ten minutes, sir. Is Denis in the kitchen?"

"Yes. Tell him to make some more toast, will you? And he'd better fry some more bacon, I think."

Archie crossed the dining-room and opened the kitchen door. He saw old Denis Whalen toasting bread before the open front of the stove. The servant turned with a sharp start at the sound of the opening door. He twisted an apprehensive face across his shoulder and dropped the toasting fork. But on seeing who it was at the door he looked relieved.

"Good morning, Denis," said Archie, eyeing him inquiringly. "More toast and bacon, please, and a jug of hot water."

"Good morning to yerself, sir," replied Denis. "More bacon and toast it is, Mr. Archie. Would ye help yerself to the hot water?"

Archie advanced to the stove, after closing the door behind him. He read a purpose in Whalen's eyes, and was not surprised when the old man laid a hand on his arm and began to whisper nervously.

"The captain's spendin' money like buttermilk," whispered Denis. "Saints alive, but ye'd think he'd got his old fortune back ag'in! It's silk socks an' new suits at every turn, sir; an' meself inheritin' a wardrobe of suits an' shirts as good as new every mornin' of me life. Where does it come from? says I—to meself. An' here's what I found in the pocket of this new coat he give me. Ye'll look at it for yerself, Mr. Archie, and tell yerself what it means. It was in the pocket when he give me the coat."

He took an envelope from his pocket and gave it to Archie. The envelope had been neatly cut at one end, and was a trifle the worse for wear. The captain never opened an envelope except by cutting it at one end. He was very fussy about many little matters of this sort. The envelope

was addressed to Archibald MacElroy. The stamp had been canceled at Bird Corner, a village and postoffice about sixteen miles from the Blue Bend, on the big river. The envelope was empty. Archie held it with a shaking hand and stared at it with darkened eyes.

"Thank you, Denis," he said at last. "I may have this, I suppose?"

"Sure, sir; it's yer own," replied Whalen.

Archie got hot water from the kettle on the stove and went up to his bedroom by way of the back stairs. He took a cold bath, shaved, and changed. When he returned to the dining-room he found the captain still at the table, his chair pushed back a little and a monocle in his left eye, reading the morning paper.

"What sport?" asked the captain, glancing up from the paper.

"No fishing; but I had some remarkable and rather bewildering adventures," replied Archie dryly. "I was attacked and imprisoned by an old man named Archibald Morgan, who has a big place on the Blue Bend. This Morgan swore that he had sent me a check for five hundred dollars,

and that I had indorsed and cashed the check. I denied it, of course, and he was furious. The letter was posted at Bird's Corner, the postoffice for all that section. By the way, do you know anything of this envelope, sir?"

He produced the envelope which Denis had given him and placed it on the table in front of his father. The captain stared at it for a long time without a word, without touching it. His haggard face was the color of ashes. At last he raised his head, glanced fleetingly at his son's accusing eyes, then turned away.

"What—are you going to—do about it?" he whispered.

"You are my father, after all," replied Archie quietly. "And you have worn the queen's coat with distinction. I can do nothing but borrow the money and take it back to Morgan."

"Morgan!" cried the captain, jumping to his feet. "That man always hated me—was always jealous of me!"

He swayed, clutched at the edge of the table, and fell unconscious.

CHAPTER X

THE PEDDLER'S RETURN

William Flint slept soundly in the deserted cottage of Jim Samson. He needed sleep, Heaven knows, for the night had been a hard one, and the crack on the head had been harder still! Aching head, wasted tissues, and poisoned blood required sleep and rest as nothing else in the world. Flint, in spite of his size, was no more than a shell of a man. Fifteen years before his eyes had been clear and keen, his lungs untiring, his limbs and trunk padded with springy muscles. And in those days his brain had been clear and his heart clean. And now he was soggy inside and out—in spirit, mind, and body. His eyes were dim and unreliable, his breath was short, his legs and arms were big with useless fat, his mind was always foggy. He was not a figure of fun, save to the unthinking. He was a figure of pity—yes, and of disgust. He had sold his manhood and his physi-

cal health for a fleeting glow in his blood and a foolish irritation in his brain.

It was close upon nine o'clock when old Hedley Bean appeared in the road before the deserted house. He issued from the high spruce woods on foot. He smoked his pipe and looked abroad at the wild, sunlit landscape with the air of a good man at peace with himself and the world. Neither the gray mare nor the ramshackly wagon were anywhere in sight. The peddler at last turned his red-brown eyes upon the house. He smiled grimly. It was evident that he did not think very highly of poor Jim Samson's home. He strolled to the gap in the fence, rested his arms on the bars, and continued to gaze at the little, unpainted frame house.

"If ever there was a fool lived in this country, Jim Samson's him," he muttered. "An' if ever there was a white-livered coward, that's Jim, too; but I did think he hadn't no harm in him, I did."

He crawled through the bars and wandered aimlessly across the stumpy clearing. He paused for a little while among the stumps to regard Mr. Flint's horse, which Samson had deserted, with a calculating glance. He was wondering how long

it was likely to be before Flint returned for his horse. Then he wandered around to the back of the house. At the sight of the back door standing wide open he crouched behind a little heap of split stove wood quick as a flash. His brown, wrinkled face suddenly grew sly and furtive. He was afraid, but he did not lose his wits. He was as suspicious as a wild lynx of the woods of anything that looked like a trap of any kind. And that open door suggested a trap to his guilty mind. For a long time he crouched motionless behind the wood pile, peering around the edge of it at the open door and blank windows of the silent house. At last he darted from the shelter of the wood-pile to that of an empty chicken-coop. Here again he waited and watched for fully ten minutes.

Still the house showed no sign of life, the door remaining open and the windows blank. The old peddler was unarmed. It was part of his game to go unarmed. Just now he regretted the fact that he did not happen to have a revolver in his pocket. His next move was to the open door. That required an extra twist on his courage; but curiosity had hold of him. He slipped into the kitchen like

a shadow. He moved noiselessly from the kitchen to the narrow hall. Suddenly a sound caught his attention. It was the sound of deep, unguarded breathing.

Mr. Bean did not awaken Mr. Flint immediately. He went through the sleeper's pockets and possessed himself of a revolver. His small, nut-brown face was a study in evil—in hate, rage, scorn, and a sort of snarling contemplation of revenge. For several seconds he stood beside the inspector, with the weapon in his right hand, staring down at him with that devilish mask of a face. Then he fell to kicking the sleeper smartly in the ribs. Flint stopped snoring and began to grunt and groan. The peddler continued to kick sharply, but with a nice reserve of force. At last Flint opened his eyes and stared blankly up at his tormentor.

"So here ye are!" remarked the peddler, twisting his thin mouth.

The inflamed blood ebbed from the big man's face, leaving the skin mottled in pale purples and blues. His moist eyes became hot and dry with terror. Bean sneered, and ceased the play of his

toe upon the other's ribs. He twirled the revolver on his finger.

"What—what the devil—are you about?" asked Flint unsteadily.

"I'm attendin' to my business," replied Bean. "Lay still, or this here weepen may go off. I ain't used to pistols."

His animal-like eyes brightened with a glow of brutal exultation.

"I figgered on findin' ye here," he continued, lying with convincing ease. "I've got yer friend Jim Samson where I want him—an' that's where I'll soon be havin' ye, too—unless this here pistol of yourn goes off unexpectedly. She's pretty light on the trigger, ain't she?"

"Turn it away!" moaned Flint. "Man, d'you want to murder me? What's eatin' you, anyhow? What are you treatin' me like this for?"

"That don't go with Hedley Bean," sneered the peddler. "Cut it out! I caught Jim Samson, the poor fool, an' now I got you—and before ye git away from me ye'll pay for the damage ye done me! D'ye understand?"

Flint thought hard and quick. His mind was

active for the moment, but none too clear. He saw that it could not have been the peddler who hit him over the head on Morgan's lawn, took his money, and landed him on the river bank in front of Jim's place. And Jim had not deserted him, after all. The peddler had found Jim and taken him away. So Chief Morgan was the man who had assaulted him, robbed him, and landed him on the beach. He decided to get his knife into Morgan.

"What are you talkin' about?" he asked. "What's the trouble between you an' Jim? Morgan told me the two of you was partners."

"Morgan? What's Morgan got to do with it?" asked the peddler.

Flint closed his eyes, partly with design, partly with weariness. Bean immediately applied his toe again to those sore ribs as a gentle reminder that dreaming-time was over.

"Wake up!" he snarled. "What's this about Morgan?"

Flint sat up with an oath; but the revolver, and still more the expression on the peddler's face, chilled the brief gust of resistance.

"It's me who should be askin' questions," he whined. "I got the evidence on you, Hedley Bean. Don't forget I'm a constable."

"Forgit it yerself," retorted Bean, "and tell me what ye've got to say about that white-whiskered old fool, Chief Morgan."

"It was Morgan who did his duty and told me where I'd find your stuff," said Flint. "He's too big a man for you to harm, so I don't mind tellin' you. And he told me you and Jim Samson was partners. I didn't think Jim had the nerve. He's a fool, Jim is; but I didn't think there was any harm in him."

"So it was Morgan, was it?" said the peddler. "Maybe so, though I ain't takin' yer word for it. D'ye mind tellin' me what Jim was runnin' away for, if it wasn't for fear of me?"

"What was he runnin' away for?" repeated the constable. "Well, I don't mind tellin' you what he run away for. It was because I told him to get out of this country soon's I heard he was your partner. I guess that's reason enough."

"Sure—for Jim Samson," returned the peddler with a sneering grin. "It don't take much to scare

Jim. So it was Morgan put ye wise, was it? Didn't think Morgan would have any dealin's with a man like ye, even to stab my business. Well, I reckon I'll hev to think up some plan of settlin' the chief's hash. An' somebody'll hev to pay for all that good liquor ye poured onto the ground."

"You'll pay for that—and pretty heavy, too," said Flint.

The peddler's eyes flashed and his mouth twisted.

"Don't ye go to rilin' me, Bill Flint, or I'll forgit myself and put a bullet into ye," he said. "Keep a civil tongue in yer ugly head."

The inspector subsided. The peddler grinned at him.

"Yer not smart enough to fool me, Bill Flint," he said. "I took a good look at the busted crockery ye left in the woods. Jam-pots—hey? Jam-pots, pickle bottles, an' molasses jugs. That's when ye overreached yerself.

"To-morrow I'll take ye into the woods with me, an' then ye kin show me where ye hid my liquor. Ye needn't begin lyin'. Git onto yer pins now an' come along downstairs with me. I want ye to git me a bit of rope. I can't trust ye to leave ye while

I go an' git it myself. Ye've got a bad reputation, Bill."

Flint, thoroughly frightened, protested that he was not able to move. He said that he had fallen down the stairs the night before and hurt his head. He even showed the bump.

"Ye'll fall down an' break yer neck some day if ye don't quit yer drinkin'," replied the peddler heartlessly. "Yer a fine man for yer job, ain't ye? Now, git up an' come along with me."

He kicked Flint to his feet. They went downstairs and out of the house, the peddler and the revolver in the rear. In the barn they found some rope. It was just what Hedley Bean was looking for.

"Set down on the hay thar an' I'll tie ye up," he said.

And he did it, in spite of Flint's protests and prayers. The inspector lay in the hay for three hours, tied hand and foot, and scared to the bottom of his miserable soul. He was afraid that the peddler intended to leave him there to starve. But at the end of those three terrifying hours he heard the sound of wheels and voices. Hedley

Bean had brought Jim Samson and his family back to their deserted home—horse, wagon, mattresses, and all. Since the night before, on which Jim had tried to escape, the whole family had been prisoners in a shack away back in the woods; but now that the peddler had Flint's word as well as Jim's that Jim had not been the informer, he had no object in punishing the simple-minded woodsman.

Jim had been very useful to Bean in the past, and might be of some use in the immediate future. You may be sure that when the peddler first returned to the shack in the woods and informed Jim that he had caught the inspector lying asleep in the deserted house, poor Jim's heart had missed a few beats and then seemed to melt entirely into a handful of cold water. But when the old man had gone on to say that Flint had admitted that Chief Morgan had given the information, Jim's heart had become more or less solid again. He was vastly puzzled, but greatly relieved. He was at a loss to see why the inspector should have lied about Morgan to save his, Jim's, neck. He comforted himself with the reflection that Flint must have had some reason for it, but he looked forward to meet-

ing Flint with anything but pleasure. Flint's money was still in his pocket.

Jim Samson did not come face to face with Flint until the wagon was unpacked and the kitchen fire lighted. Then the peddler sent Jim over to the barn with food and water for the prisoner. Jim went on the errand with dragging feet. As he closed the door behind him he turned and peered back at the house through a crack. He saw the head of the peddler at the kitchen window. The old man was drinking tea.

"That you, Jim?" queried Flint from a heap of hay in the corner.

Jim swallowed nothing very hard three or four times, then tried to wet his lips with a very dry tongue.

"Sure it's me, Mr. Flint," he said at last; "and sorry I am to see ye here, sir, in the old man's hands. He had me tied up, too, until a couple of hours ago."

"Where's the old murderer now?" asked the inspector guardedly.

"He's in the kitchen swillin' tea," said Jim with

one of his colorless eyes again applied to the crack in the door.

"Jim," said Flint, "I done you a good turn. I saved your blessed bacon for you, my boy. When the old devil found me asleep, an' woke me up with a kick in the ribs, I thought first of you. So I lied to him like a book to save your face. I told him it was Chief Morgan who informed on him and told me where to find his stuff."

"That was derved good of you, Mr. Flint," said Jim.

"But what were you runnin' away for when he caught you?" asked the inspector; "and what happened to you up on the Blue Bend? How long did you wait for me with the boat? Did they do anything to you?"

Jim glanced again through the crack of the door, then drew near to the prostrate inspector, laid the food and drink on the floor, and helped Flint to a sitting position. He held the bowl of tea to the prisoner's swollen lips. Flint gulped thirstily.

"I run away because I was scart to death Hedley Bean would come an' do jist what he come an' done," whispered Jim. "I was too almighty scart

of that old man for to wait till ye paid me for the job, Mr. Flint." He shot a desperate glance at the big man out of the corner of his eyes as he made this statement. "As for how long I stayed at the reservation—well, I can't exactly tell ye. I must hev waited more'n two hours, Mr. Flint. What—what happened to yerself?"

"Morgan knocked me over the head and robbed me of all my money—and next thing I know I was lyin' here on your front," replied Flint.

Then a light came to the simple woodsman. Now he understood why Flint had told the peddler that Morgan was the informer. Like many a simple soul, Jim was not quite such a fool as he looked.

"The money!" he exclaimed in a fainting voice. "The money? Did he take the money, Mr. Flint—what ye were goin' to pay to me?"

"Every blasted cent of it," said Flint. "You'll have to whistle for your pay, Jim." He laughed harshly. "But we'll take it out of his skin," he added.

Flint's hands were untied by this time, and he was doing his best to eat a little of the half-cold fried potatoes on his plate. But he was in no con-

dition to swallow food of that sort. He gave up the painful attempt.

"Jim," he said, leaning his head back against the side of the barn and closing his eyes, "I done you a good turn. I saved your face when I lied to Bean. And you can do me a good turn, Jim. That old skunk means to keep me tied up till tomorrow, I guess, an' then try to git square with me somehow or other. You can slip out here tonight, Jim, and cut these here ropes off me. You can see that my horse is somewheres handy, too. Once I git onto the horse's back I'll be safe. You can do that easy enough; and I'll make it worth your while, even if I hev lost all that wad of money."

Jim slipped to the door and again peered through the crack.

"He's comin'!" he whispered.

The peddler entered the barn and looked suspiciously from Flint to Samson. Jim stood with the empty bowl in his hand, a picture of humility and fear. Flint tried to glare at the old man.

"Look a here," he said, "what do you think you goin' to do with me?"

"I'll let ye go—when I'm done with ye," replied Bean; "but that won't be for a few days yet. Unhitch his feet, Jim, so's he kin walk into the house."

Flint was marched into the house, led to an empty room on the second floor, and again tied up. Then Bean dismissed Jim Samson and closed the door. He stood in front of his captive, revolver in hand, and leered at him wickedly.

"Now ye kin tell me where ye put the stuff ye stole from me," he said. "I'm thinkin' of goin' out of business; but I want to know where ye hid that stuff of mine, jist the same. It's worth money, it is."

"Go to blazes and ask your gran'father!" retorted the inspector.

"What's that?" cried the peddler, his face blackening with rage.

"Go to thunder an' find out!" said Flint with wavering assurance.

"I don't want none of yer lip!" screamed the peddler. And then, mastering his rage with an effort that twisted his face, he said very softly: "Don't ye want to tell me, Mr. Flint?"

"I ain't goin' to tell you," retorted Flint.

"Sorry to hear ye say so," replied Bean with a sickening grin on his round face. "I hate to argify with ye, Mr. Flint, yer such a fine, noble figger of a man. Mis' Flint must be proud of ye, I'm sure—an' the children. But ye got one little vice, sir, an' that is yer appetite for hard liquor. I'd be goin' clean ag'in' my duty to yerself an' yer precious family if I was to leave ye in possession of all that stuff ye stole from me. So I'll jist naturally hev to make ye tell me what ye done with it—so's to put ye out of the way of temptation. I got some matches here, ye see. I'll jist light this one an' hold the burnin' end of it ag'in' the palm of yer hand—like this."

Flint uttered a hoarse scream almost before the little flame had touched his skin, jerked his bound hands away and rolled upon the floor. The peddler chuckled, went after him, sat astride him and lit another match. Flint's screams rang through the little house and out across the stumpy clearing. Flint's spirit was a poor thing. His natural courage had been sapped and burned out long ago by his manner of living. For years he had de-

pended upon "Dutch courage," and that's a variety that soon evaporates.

"I haven't so much as raised a blister on ye yet, ye big calf," yelled Bean. "Shut up, can't ye—an' tell me all about it."

William Flint, that spineless, sodden, quaking wreck of a man told all that he knew.

CHAPTER XI

ARCHIE MACELROY RETURNS

Flint was allowed to go unbound for an hour at a time under the old peddler's eye; but when Bean and Jim set out early in the morning for the woods, they left the constable bound hand and foot. Bean had no fear that Mrs. Samson would give Flint his liberty. The peddler and Jim returned to the house late at night, weary but successful. Flint was untied and permitted to join them at supper.

"I found the stuff jist where ye told me," said Bean. "It ain't suffered none, far's I kin see. But I cal'late to go out of business pretty soon, so I reckon the best thing I kin do is sell the stuff to yerself, Mr. Flint."

"To me!" cried Flint in consternation. "I don't want it. Anyhow, I ain't got the price on me."

"Never mind about the cash," said Bean. "I'll take yer note for it. I guess yer good for two

hundred dollars, an' that's the value I put on the stuff. I got some note forms right here. Gimme a pen and ink, Mis' Samson. We'll git this here business fixed right up."

"I won't sign no note!" roared Flint.

Bean stared at him unwinkingly and brought the big revolver to light. Mrs. Samson trembled and Jim's face went white as paper. Flint's voice, still raised in defiance, lost something in assurance.

"Now that's too danged bad," said the peddler. "Jim, I reckon ye'll hev to tie him up ag'in—an' ye'll hev to fetch me some matches, Mis' Samson. About half a dozen'll do the business, I cal'late."

The constable's large form quaked, his puffy hands trembled on the table before him, his inflamed face became colorless and drawn. His eyes grew blank with terror. Bean watched these signs of mental stress with a fiendish grin.

"You wouldn't do that?" he whispered. "I told you where it was. You wouldn't force me to give my note? It wouldn't be good, anyhow—if you got it from me by force. I haven't any money in the bank, anyhow."

"Yer a liar," replied Bean. "An' I reckon the

note'll be good enough. Don't ye worry about that, Mr. Flint. I'll be able to cash it."

One of Flint's shaking hands came in contact with the handle of a heavy knife on the table which Mrs. Samson used for cutting bread. The fumbling fingers closed upon it. The expression of his eyes altered. The lids drooped a little, the pupils dwindled to black specks. Bean noted these changes and dodged—and the heavy knife clanged against the plaster behind the spot where his head had been and fell to the floor with a clatter. Mrs. Samson screamed. The peddler suddenly remembered his revolver and presented it—and Flint sagged back in his chair, breathless, beaten.

"If ye'd bin quicker ye'd hev had me," remarked the peddler with terrible calm. "The gin has made ye slow as mud, an' spiled yer eye. Will ye put yer name to this now, or will I hev to roast the skin off yer hands, an' maybe off yer feet? Jim, hitch 'im up."

"No!" screamed Flint. "I'll sign the note!"

And he did. Bean stowed it away in a battered pocketbook.

"And now will you let me go?" asked the inspector.

"Not to-night," replied Bean—"an' not to-morrow. I got to settle Chief Morgan's hash for him, an' ye've got to help me. I ain't settled on a plan yet; but I reckon I'll hev one all thought out by mornin'."

Flint was permitted to sit in the kitchen and smoke for an hour or two, but at nine o'clock he was taken upstairs and securely bound for the night.

The old peddler lay awake a long time, planning his revenge on Chief Morgan. He decided that fire was the force to use. Fire holds no thumb-prints, and a great deal of harm can be done with it. He thought of Morgan's fine house, fat barns, and miles of valuable timber. Fire was certainly the thing to employ against that old man. His possessions fairly cried aloud for the torch. Bean grinned in the dark as he made his plans. He would make use of Flint and Jim Samson, of course. He considered Flint to be one of his tools now as surely as Jim. He had the inspector in his power. The three of them would go to Morgan's

place on the Blue Bend and take up their positions after dark—one near the house, one near the barns and stables, and the third in the big woods which the old chief had preserved so jealously. The timber would be fired first in half a dozen places. He, Bean, would attend to that himself, so that there should be no bungling. Then he would slip away to the boat, the burning woods would draw the people away from the buildings, and then Jim and Flint would set the house and barns afire.

This is as far as Bean's plans for revenge were detailed. Whether or not he would wait for his confederates, if he reached the boat first, he had not decided. It might be wiser to leave them in the enemies' country to run the chance of being caught, for he intended to leave the province almost immediately, and so would have no further use for Jim or Flint—and even a tool may turn in the hand and cut the fingers of its master. Uncertainly though he viewed the future for his confederates, he saw it clearly enough for himself. After his stroke of revenge he would return to Flint's native town with all speed, discount the inspector's note, then gather up what remained of his own

funds in the province and slip across the border. For several years past he had been salting his money away in the great republic to the south. Old Hedley Bean was a rich man—in soiled money. No ties would hold him to the land of his birth and shady pursuits now that he had made his pile and come to the conclusion that it was about time to get out.

So the old peddler planned; and at last he fell into peaceful and refreshing slumber, content with the thought that his enemies were just about where he wanted them to be; that no one had got the best of him, and that his way of retreat was clear. Of course if he had been possessed of a normal human heart his conscience would have blistered him; but Hedley Bean's heart was for nothing but pumping the strong, dark, and bitter fluid that was his blood.

Flint, too, remained awake a long time that night. He waited for Jim Samson to come and set him free. Flint was a fool. He should have known that Jim would play no more tricks on the old peddler. It was close upon dawn when he at last sank into uneasy slumber.

The expedition against Chief Morgan did not make a start next morning for the sufficient reason that Bill Flint was in no condition to move. He was sick; but the peddler was slow to believe that the indisposition was genuine. He suspected Flint of malingering. He did not know that the inspector was as anxious to strike a blow at Chief Morgan as he was himself—and with a better reason. But Flint was really played out, for the time being. After abusing him for fifteen or twenty minutes, Bean realized that he was really unfit to set out on a long journey. So he untied the sufferer, put him to bed, and doctored him.

Flint had undermined his constitution by heavy drinking, and the exposure of those chilly hours on the river bank, before dawn, had settled on his chest in a heavy, feverish cold. The peddler applied a mustard plaster to the sick man's chest and dosed him with quinine and ginger tea. Also he put bottles of hot water at the patient's feet, and covered him with blankets to the point of suffocation. And the trick was done. The cold was dispelled. Two days after the first dose Flint arose from his bed free from pain, clear in his pipes, but

very weak. A doctor would have given him a few more days in bed; but Bean was not treating for a permanent cure. All he tried for was to get his patient in condition to take part in the work that he had planned for the immediate future. Flint complained, and the peddler displayed his revolver. So a dunnage-bag was packed with provisions and blankets.

"Will I bring my duck-gun along, Mr. Bean?" asked Jim.

"Naw," replied Bean. "I cal'late this here pistol is all the firearms we'll be needin'. Step lively, now. It's a long pull, an' ag'in' a swift current, an' we don't want to bust ourselves. I'll carry that thar ax, Mr. Flint. Ye'd best button up yer overcoat."

It was early evening. The sun was half-way down the western sky, and its light was deepening to warm gold. Mid-afternoon is a poor time, from the spirit's point of view, to set out on a desperate adventure. Night is the better time, early morning the best. Things sleep or reflect in the afternoon. The blood runs slow. Birds and beasts stop feeding and squat in their coverts until dusk. The

loneliness of this time of day, in wild regions, is more daunting than the gray desolation of dawn.

Even Jim Samson felt this, and his heart was heavy as the three set out from the house toward the river. Jim walked ahead, with the dunnage-bag on his shoulder. Flint followed with a paddle. The peddler brought up the rear, carrying the oars and the ax. They came to the top of the bank, which was screened with alders and cherry bushes. Jim drew back, crouching, and turned his face across his shoulders to the others. The big, waterproof bag rolled from his shoulders and he described a warning gesture with his hand. The inspector and the peddler crouched and continued to advance until they came in line with Jim. They peered out and down at the river through the screen of bushes.

"A canoe," whispered Jim. "Down stream a bit an' close in shore."

The others crawled forward a little farther and looked down stream. They saw the canoe advancing steadily but slowly against the current, a man standing in the stern and poling, another man sitting at his ease in the bow. The peddler's face

twisted and he glanced sidewise at the inspector. He saw that Flint was staring with a dangerous gleam in his bloodshot eyes.

"That's Andy Flemming," he said, "and the feller in the bow is the skunk I've bin wishin' to meet ag'in for quite a while."

"Same here," replied Flint. "That's MacElroy, the lumberman. He knocked me about one day when the drives was comin' down this spring, and when I wasn't in shape to give him the lickin' he needed. He pretended to mistake me for you, curse him! He knocked me about cruel."

"Did he, now?" said Bean, with a snarl. "Well, I'm after him, too. He happened onto me in the bushes the night of that fight between the two gangs of drivers. He tried to kill me, but he was scart to do it with his own hands. He chucked me into the middle of the fight, he did, and the lads kicked me about something fierce. We may's well settle with him now, Bill, afore goin' any farther. Nobody tries to kill me without gettin' his receipt in full. Jim, slip up to the house an' fetch down yer shotgun. Git a move on ye. They're comin' along pretty smart."

For a second or two Jim seemed to struggle with an inclination to refuse the old man's order. His limbs trembled and his face worked. Bean turned upon him quick as a cat, grabbed him by his right wrist, and thrust the muzzle of that ever-ready revolver into the craven face. His opaque, red-brown eyes were the eyes of a devil.

"Git!" he hissed.

Jim got, and he was soon back with the gun. The peddler took the cumbersome weapon from his hands and looked at it suspiciously. It was a muzzle-loader and there were caps on the nipples.

"Is she loaded?" he asked in a savage whisper.

"Sure," replied Jim huskily. "Sure she's loaded. For God's sake, Mr. Bean, don't shoot anybody! Ye wouldn't do murder now, Mr. Bean!"

"There'll sure be the deuce to pay if you kill somebody," remarked the inspector uneasily. "Give them a scare. That'll be enough."

The peddler sneered and looked from one to the other of his faint-hearted followers with a face that set their pulses fluttering.

"I ain't goin' to murder nobody," he said. "I ain't that kind. What's she loaded with, Jim?"

"Duck-shot," replied Jim.

"Duck-shot's good enough," said Bean. "It won't kill 'em at this range; an' if they want'er upset the canoe, an' if they happen to be tickled up a bit so's they can't swim, then it's their own fault. That young feller tried to git me killed, anyhow. Here's the gun, Jim; an' none of yer tricks! I'd make ye do the shootin', Flint, if it wasn't fer yer blasted foggy eyesight. Give 'em each a barrel, Jim, when the canoe gits right abreast of us."

"Not me," whined Samson. "Not me, for mercy's sake, Mr. Bean!"

"You, for sure," replied Bean. "D'ye think I'd risk doin' jobs like this when I keep cattle like yerself an' Flint to do them for me?"

"Let Flint do the shootin'. MacElroy never done me no harm."

"Flint? Not him. He couldn't hit a barn. Take aim, now—an' if I catch ye at any trick I'll put a bullet into ye. Here they come. Give a barrel to each of 'em—an' we'll trust the river to do the rest."

The canoe drew slowly into line with the crouching men on the top of the bank. Jim took the gun

with a jerking hand and lay flat. In the canoe Andy Flemming plied the long pole easily and steadily, and Archie MacElroy sat at his ease and smoked a pipe. He was comfortably tired, for he had been doing his share of the work earlier in the day. They were bound for the headwaters of the Blue Bend, but it was his intention to stop off at Morgan's place before getting to work for Marsh & West. In an inner pocket of Archie's coat reposed five hundred dollars for the chief. He had borrowed it from a bank. Now he was thinking of Morgan's young relative, Jessie. The girl had treated him badly; but, on the other hand, he had not made allowances for the fact that she knew nothing of him. And the chief had been very near to the truth. Would he have to tell the girl about his father's dishonesty? If there was no other way of clearing himself with her, he would tell her everything. She had not been fair to him, but she had brought Andy to his rescue when her crazy relative had him imprisoned. And he had not been fair to her. He knew now that he wanted nothing else in the world so much as her respect and sympathy. She had defied the old chief to his

face. How had the chief punished her for that? This was a question that had sorely disturbed Archie's sleep of late.

"Now let 'em have it," whispered the peddler into Jim's ear.

But Jim was even more afraid of murder than he was of Hedley Bean. He aimed fairly at the side of the canoe, amidships and on the waterline. The canoe was moving slowly through the swift black current, not more than ten or twelve yards away. Both barrels of the big gun were heavily charged with number two shot. He held the sight steady on the sliding side of the canoe and pulled both triggers. The recoil jerked his right shoulder sharply back into the peddler's face. The double charge tore a gaping hole through the bark skin and thin cedar lining of the canoe. At the numbing shock and deafening report Andy Fleming lost his balance and Archie sprang half-way to his feet. Quick as thought the wounded canoe turned nimbly over like a thing of life. The men plunged full length into the swift, black water. The canoe wallowed, spun around, and sank.

Archie and Andy came to the surface, shook

the water from their eyes, and struck out strongly for the shore. They were unhurt, but there was fury in their hearts. Archie, in particular, was ready to bite iron. They were close to shore. The water was not deep, but too deep and swift for quick wading. They swam for the better speed, though they drifted a little down stream.

The men on the bank lost their nerve at sight of the approach of the swimmers. They could see at a glance that the young men were not injured. Bean turned savagely upon Jim, with the revolver outthrust, but the woodsman, in a blind panic, struck the old man's wrist and sent the revolver hopping into the bushes, then turned and ran toward the house and the tall woods beyond.

Bean snatched up the ax and oars and dashed down the bank to Jim's boat. Flint followed him, for he saw that the river offered the safest retreat. Bean cut the boat's painter with a blow of the ax. They pushed the little craft into the stream and sprang aboard. The swimmers, who now stood hip-deep in the water only a few yards away, turned to them with furious oaths and plunged at the boat. While Bean threatened them

with one oar, Flint snatched up the other and pushed the boat violently into deep water. Archie and his companion glared after the boat for a few seconds and told Bean and Flint what they thought of them. No reply came from the boat, which was now heading up against the current, with the peddler in the stern and the inspector pulling weakly at the oars. Then the ex-canoemen bethought themselves of their outfit.

The canoe was out of sight, of course, but they knew that she was being rolled over and over along the bed of the river as surely as if they saw her. They looked about for some signs of their kit and provisions. Andy caught sight of something, plunged into the water, and dragged a half-water-logged box of grub ashore. He turned the box upside down on the shingle, in the hope of saving the contents. Archie waded in and rescued a pair of drifting, slowly sinking blankets.

CHAPTER XII

ADVANCE OF THE AVENGERS

Despite all their efforts, Archie and his guide salvaged nothing more than the pair of blankets and the one box of provisions. Their tent, dunnage-bag of clothing, flour, ham, and molasses, two axes, a compass, a rifle, tobacco, and a box of tinned goods—all were gone, along with Andy's canoe. It was a shrewd knock. Archie gave it a worse name than that. Even Andy's language was vivid. Here they were, half-way between nowhere and nowhere in particular, with two wet blankets and a box full of water-soaked food. To top it, they were in a hurry. The food in the box had not all been ruined by the water, thank fortune! The butter was in good condition, as were the tin of beef and three tins of condensed milk and the pot of jam; but the salt had vanished, the tea was floating about, and the bread was a slushy mass.

"I guess somebody lives here somewheres," said Andy. "This looks like a regular tyin'-up place for a boat, an' that looks like a path sure enough. There's a guy named Samson hangs out somewheres 'round here. We may's well take a look."

"By all means; but what are Flint and the peddler doing together, and why did they fire at us?" asked Archie.

"The devil only knows! Birds of a feather, I guess."

"They didn't have the gun with them when they got into the boat."

"That's right, by thunder! They must hev dropped it so's they could run the faster. We may's well take a look around for it, boss."

Leaving the box and blankets on the shore, they climbed the path to the top of the bank. They were relieved to see the clearing and the house, but though they searched everywhere for the gun that had been used so disastrously against them they found no sign of it except a flake of burned paper-wad.

"Guess that means there was three of 'em," said Andy. "The third may still be hidin' round here

somewheres, an' maybe aimin' his gun at us this very minute. Would it be Jim Samson, I wonder? No, he ain't a bad feller, at heart; an' he wouldn't hev the nerve to shoot at us."

"Three of them?" said MacElroy. "Yes, I haven't a doubt of it. By Heaven, Andy, that was a nicely planned ambush—and the man with the gun had a very good reason for not showing himself! I suppose you noticed that the boat headed upriver?"

"What's in yer mind?" queried the guide. "Maybe ye think the man who fired the shot was Chief Morgan? If ye do, boss, yer wrong. Morgan wouldn't hev no dealin's with Flint or Bean."

"You mean that Morgan wouldn't fire the shot, or come in personal contact with either of those two," replied Archie grimly. "But I bet you ten dollars he's not above paying them to ambush me, and another ten that the man with the gun is one of his Indians. Just think it over quietly, Andy. The old fellow hates me like poison because I'm the son of my father. Just why he hates my father I don't know. He swore he'd shoot me like a dog if he ever caught me on his place again—so what

is more likely than that he decided to shoot me before I reached his place? And what more likely than that he would employ Flint and the peddler to lend a hand—the worst men, after himself, in the country, and the only people beside himself who owe me a grudge?”

“Maybe ye’re right, boss,” replied Flemming; “but I hope ye ain’t fool enough to think the young lady had anything to do with it.”

“Great Heavens, no!” exclaimed Archie savagely. “Just leave her out of this, will you? Come up to the house. We may learn something there—and, whatever you do, keep your mouth shut about Morgan.”

They went up to the back door of the house. Archie knocked, and a faded, red-eyed woman opened the door. She stared at them with an expression of shrinking horror.

“Are—are ye hurt?” she gasped.

“Not in the least,” replied MacElroy. “We upset our canoe and lost it and our outfit. You heard a shot, I suppose? Did you see anyone with a gun?”

The woman lowered her gaze to his dripping

feet. Two children, untidily and raggedly clothed, came from the vicinity of the stove and clung to her faded skirts. Their little faces were thin and none too clean. Archie looked at them, and his face softened. Nothing in the world touched his heart so keenly as the sight of ill-cared-for children. He did not love children particularly, and had never had anything to do with them; but he understood them as if by instinct, and pitied all of them that looked as if they were not being given a fair chance.

"Don't think that we suspect you of anything," he said in a new voice. "We know who fired the shot—or are pretty sure of it. Don't be frightened. Is your husband about anywhere?"

She raised her eyes for a second and gave him a keen but fleeting glance. A little color came back to her face. Her thin shoulders straightened. She drew back from the door and invited the men to enter.

"There was three men," she said, and her long-hidden hatred of old Hedley Bean glowed in her like a coal of fire. "One of 'em was the peddler—Mr. Bean. They went down to the river—an'

then I heard the shot—an' then one of 'em come runnin' back. He had a gun. He run as far as the yard, an' then turned up that way, upriver, and dodged into the woods. He run like a deer. Mr. Bean nor the other feller didn't come back. Maybe ye seen 'em, sir?"

Again her frightened eyes sought Archie's face for an instant.

"We saw them," replied Archie. "The man with Bean was Flint. But who was the man with the gun? What did he look like?"

By this time they were all clustered around the kitchen stove.

"I don't rightly know," said the woman. "I—I never seen him before that I kin remember. He was—big." Her poor brain worked as it had never worked before. Anything—anything to save Jim! Anything—anything to get old Hedley Bean into the sure and relentless clutches of the law. "Yes, he was big," she continued. "An' black—black as an Injun. Maybe he was a Injun."

Archie glanced at the guide and nodded his head slightly. This did not escape the notice of the woman. Her courage strengthened.

"Why an Indian?" asked MacElroy quietly.

"Well, sir, Mr. Bean gets the Injuns to help him in his business, so I've heard," she continued, lying wildly and hopefully.

"Ye're Mis Samson, ain't ye?" asked Flemming politely.

She turned a frightened, suspicious face to him.

"Yes," she whispered. "I'm Jim Samson's wife."

"Where's Jim?" asked the guide.

"He—he's back somewheres, cuttin' wood. He went early."

"Do you think your husband could find us a canoe or a boat?" asked Archie. "I'd pay him well for something of the kind. We're bound for the Blue Bend, you see, and we're in a hurry."

"Jim has a boat," said Mrs. Samson uncertainly.

"I'm afraid that's the one Bean and Flint escaped in," said Archie. "They cut the painter and headed upstream. We pretty nearly had them. I don't think they'll come back this way for a while."

The woman's eyes brightened.

"I'll go fetch Jim," she said eagerly. "Take chairs an' set up to the fire. I'll soon be back."

The men drew their chairs close to the stove, the better to dry their clothes. The woman left the house, taking the children with her. The children returned in five minutes; and, though the young men tried to talk to them, they would not say a word. The fact is, their mother had told them to keep their mouths shut. Mrs. Samson was back in half an hour, with Jim at her heels. Jim carried an ax on his shoulder. As usual, he looked as if he were ready to turn and flee at a moment's notice. He was a pitiful object to behold as he stood on the threshold and glanced at the young men with anxious, suspicious, and humble eyes.

"Why do you look at us like that?" demanded Archie. "We don't mean to bite you. Brace up!"

"He always looks like that. It's his nater," said the woman.

"Sure," said Andy. "I've bin told as how Jim Samson always looks scart half out of his wits an' ready to run."

Jim smiled feebly and good-naturedly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Samson," said Archie kindly. "We've had an accident. Mrs. Sam-

son has told you, I suppose. Can you help us out? We want grub and some sort of canoe or boat. We're bound for the Blue Bend—and we're in more of a hurry now than we were when we started."

Jim's Adam's apple went up and down his throat violently four or five times before he found his voice.

"I got a kinder old punt," he said huskily. "She ain't much good, I guess; but ye're welcome to her. We kin cobble her up so's she will float, like as not. An' maybe we kin let ye hev some grub. Anything to oblige ye, gents. I'm a poor man, but I'm willin' to do my best for ye."

"Well spoken," said Archie. "Now show us the punt."

The three men spent the greater part of the day in repairing the small, flat-bottomed boat of which Jim had spoken. It had not been used for a year and had lain out all winter. They patched her and braced her and calked her seams with rags and resin. At last she would hold water, and they carried her down to the river. Jim refused to take any money for the boat, but he accepted payment for such provisions and outfit as he could let them

have—a ham, a small bag of flour, a pound of tea, a little tobacco, and a couple of blankets. Archie paid him from a damp wad of bills. The big wad of bills, amounting to five hundred dollars, was in a waterproof case sewn inside his shirt. It was five o'clock when they got the little boat loaded and put out upon the swift river. The boat proved to be far more unsteady and tricky than any canoe. Andy was afraid to stand in her to pole; so both men knelt and paddled.

Jim Samson stood at the edge of the water for ten minutes and watched his unconscious deliverers make their way slowly upstream. He turned at last and bolted up the path. He hunted among the bushes for the revolver which he had knocked from the peddler's hand, and soon found it. It was loaded with five cartridges. Jim ran to the house. In a minute all was bustle. Provisions were packed, again the house was dismantled, the wagon loaded, and Jim's horse harnessed. Flint's horse was given the whole country-side for a range. The peddler's gray mare was in a well-watered pasture away back in the woods. The house was locked up. The bars were let down, Jim and his wife mounted to the

seat of the wagon, and the children sat upon the bedding in the back. The woman grasped the revolver. Jim picked up the reins, gave the nag a cut with the whip—and for the second time the Samsons made a dash for freedom and a new life.

Archie and Andy crossed the river within twenty minutes of leaving Jim Samson's front. It was a daring undertaking in that cranky little craft; but they were afraid that the large, dark man with the gun might be lurking somewhere along the wooded shore which they had left, with fresh loads in his murderous weapon. They made the crossing safely, and continued their way up toward the mouth of the Blue Bend.

The peddler and the Scott Act inspector had spent the long day on the water, struggling against heavy odds and a swift current. Flint was in no condition for severe exertion; but the old man, armed now with the ax, kept him at the oars for hours.

The peddler feared treachery on Flint's part, being afraid to take the oars himself and so free the other's hands. Their advance was deadly slow. Sometimes the boat did no more than hold her way against the swift water. Flint pulled feebly, diz-

zily at the oars, cursing now and again under his breath. The old man steered the boat into shallow water, and cursed things in general and Jim Samson in particular. Why had Jim fired at the canoe instead of at the men? and why had the poor old fool run inland instead of down to the boat? How was he, Bean, to get up to Morgan's place with only this sodden inspector to work the boat? But he would get there even if he had to crawl. He was bitter, and his determination to have revenge on the chief grew stronger as the difficulties in the way increased. He would burn out that white-whiskered informer if he had to kill Flint to accomplish it. And afterward he would settle with Jim Samson.

Shortly after noon Bean was forced to let Flint stop working and lie in the bottom of the boat. He saw that the inspector was too utterly played out to be a menace. Bean was small and old, but active. And he knew how to handle a boat. He kept in shallow water and poled with one of the oars. Better speed was made, and at three o'clock he shipped both oars and rowed across to the mouth of the Blue Bend. The big inspector con-

tinued to lie limp and useless in the bottom of the boat. Owing to the hasty nature of their embarkation, they were without food or blankets. The old man took to poling again and began the ascent of the Blue Bend, his mind working swiftly. Food must be obtained. That would be easy once he reached the reservation without being seen by Chief Morgan. He had money in his pocket; and there was a man on the reservation named Saul Mitch, with whom he had done business more than once. Mitch would sell him food, he knew, and keep his mouth shut for a price. But he knew Morgan's hold on the Maliseets well enough to feel positive that even Mitch would do nothing to help him if he suspected the real nature of his mission. He felt that he could pull the wool over Mitch's eyes without much difficulty. So he made all speed up the Blue Bend.

It was dark when the peddler ran the boat into the mouth of a small creek just above the reservation. He got Flint ashore, pulling and supporting him. Flint promptly stumbled to a dry spot and lay down among the bushes. Bean hid the boat among the overhanging alders and then set out to

find Saul Mitch. He was a master of woodcraft, and it was not long before he was at the door of Mitch's cabin. Saul himself came to the door, and his swarthy face brightened at sight of the old whisky peddler. Bean drew him outside.

"You got some drink?" queried Mitch.

"No; but maybe I'll take you to some in a day or two," replied Bean. Then he invented a story of hard luck, named what he needed, and slipped a ten-dollar bill into the Maliseet's hand. Twenty minutes later he was back with Flint with food, blankets, and a kettle of tea.

CHAPTER XIII

ARCHIE ENCOUNTERS THE CHIEF

Flint was in no shape to make himself useful that night, and Bean did not want to undertake the job alone. So they sat tight.

Archie MacElroy and his companion landed half a mile below the reservation at midnight. Like the gentlemen further upstream, they felt shy about making a fire. They lifted their cranky boat bodily into the bushes, ate a cold supper in the dark, rolled themselves in their blankets and went to sleep. They were astir at the first lift of dawn, ate a cold breakfast, smoked each a pipeful of Jim Samson's villainous tobacco, then hid the boat and dunnage under ferns and grass and a thatch of alders.

"I suppose Flint and Bean are with the old man by now, receiving their rewards," said Archie with a grim chuckle. "They feel pretty sure that they stopped us, I imagine, so they will tell the chief

that they finished us. By Heaven, Andy, those two—and the big Indian—should be hung! If we had anything in the way of a gun or a revolver I'd try to round them up this trip. They are worse than Morgan because they are sane, whereas Morgan is as mad as a hatter."

"Maybe we'd better turn back now an' git the police to help us," suggested Andy. "If the old gent's so mad that he'd send three men down river to murder us, then he'd ought to be in a bug-house. Honest, I didn't think he was crazy enough for that until Mis' Samson said as that feller with the gun was an Injun."

"I'd be tempted to turn back now—for help—if it wasn't for Miss Morgan," replied Archie; "but she treated us right—and I was a fool not to have understood at the time—and she and her mother may be in danger. I must go on with this, Andy. I want to speak to Miss Morgan, and I have some money to give to the old man. I may tell you about the money later."

"Did ye borrow money from the chief?" asked the guide in amazement.

"Not exactly," said Archie. "I'll explain some

other time. Man, I'd give a good deal for a rifle or a revolver! The old fellow is clean out of his head, it seems, and the others may be with him by now. I'll cut a club and go up to the house. You hang around here, Andy, and keep your ears buttoned back. This is none of your funeral."

The guide's jaw hardened and his eyes narrowed.

"If it's yer funeral it's mine," he said. "The two of us won't be none too many, maybe, to break into that nest. I hung round on the outside last time; but this time I'm goin' in—see?"

"Then you come of your own free choice."

"Sure thing."

"The old man has a bone to pick with you as well as with me, remember. You fired a shot past his ear and then tied him up."

"I ain't forgettin'. Maybe I'll tie him up again. Go to it, boss."

They cut two stout, four-foot stakes of maple and set out for the big house. They moved cautiously, giving the Indian encampment a wide berth. It was their firm belief that Morgan was insane—insane enough to have sent three men away down river to attempt their murder. And they thought

it likely that at least two of the hired assassins were even now at their employer's house. But they did not waver in their purpose. The boss was determined to get that dishonorable money off his hands and, if possible, let the girl know the worst of her savage relative, and the guide was determined to share every peril. But they had no intention of leaving their hides on the chief's fence if they could help it. So they advanced through the woods with circumspection.

At last they issued from the forest into a field of young oats. The scene was a cheerful and prosperous one; but it failed to lift the spirits or warm the hearts of the young men. For a minute or two they crouched in the shadow of the forest's edge and looked abroad with anxious eyes. The sun was above the eastern hills, shining white in a cloudless sky of summer blue. The day promised heat. Dewdrops flashed on the millions of pale, blue-green blades of the young oats, blue here, white there—there again red as rubies. The sunlight washed the gleaming tops of the forests and the roofs of the house and barns, and set the red chimneys of the house aglow and the clear windows

flashing. Azure smoke trailed up from the chimney of a long wing of the house. Sleek, red cattle moved, grazing, across the green of a fenced pasture behind the cluster of barns. Birds piped and fluttered in the round-roofed elms and pointed firs which clustered about the house.

"I wonder what they're up to now," remarked MacElroy. "The place looks peaceful enough, I must say; but I wish we had our rifles."

He took the five hundred dollars, in twenty-dollar bank-bills, from the secret pocket and thrust them into a side-pocket of his coat. Then he grasped his stick of maple again.

"I think we'd better skirt around toward the back of the house," he said—"behind the barns. We can get nearer that way without being seen. The more of a surprise we give them the less risk of getting shot, I imagine."

They moved along the edge of the woods for a distance of a couple of hundred yards, then followed the cover afforded by a line of young cranberry bushes along an open ditch toward the back of the barns. The shelter of the barns was reached without attracting attention so far as they could

see. They crouched in the rear of a long, low stable and listened. They heard horses munching hay inside the stalls. A calf bellowed on their right; they heard pigs grunting contentedly and fowls scratching and clucking. It was hard to believe that danger lurked here—that this was the home of a madman who had tried to murder them.

“Let’s sneak along an’ take a look,” whispered Andy.

They moved cautiously along the sun-warmed back of the stable, the boss leading, and peered cautiously around the corner. Barns and outbuildings of many shapes and sizes stood on all sides of them, but straight before them lay an open way to the back of the big house. The way was open, but not entirely clear. Several pole-fences crossed it. The kitchen door was fully a hundred and fifty yards away, and between it and the visitors lay a calf-run, a grassy paddock for horses, and a big yard. There were apple trees and wood piles in the yard. Some one issued from the kitchen door, which stood wide open.

“Look there, will ye?” whispered Andy. “There she is.”

It was Jessie Morgan. She was hatless. She wore some sort of trim dark gown with a big, light blue apron over all. Her sleeves were rolled back above her elbows. She carried a yellow bowl in one hand. She did not look as if she had been badly treated. She was the picture of health. Archie felt a mighty surge of relief and excitement in his blood. He gazed across the pens and paddocks with a flushed and eager face, and all the trouble clear as print in his eyes. Andy glanced at him and grinned.

"It don't look as if the chief had fastened *her* down in the cellar," he whispered. "All wool an' a yard wide, ain't she? I don't blame ye a mite for jumpin' into the drink to save that girl—no, nor for comin' back to court her, even if the old man is lookin' for yer hide."

"Oh, shut up!" returned Archie.

Andy grinned good-naturedly, but failed to comply with the other's request. He pressed closer to his companion and continued to whisper:

"She's headin' this way. Gosh! she'd feedin' them chickens in the red coop. That big apron becomes her fine. Ye was a fool to git mad at her,

boss. Ye wouldn't ketch me runnin' no risk like that with a girl like that. There ain't her match in the Province for looks nor nerve. Wonder if she's got anything for these here calves? Hope she has. I tell ye, Mr. MacElroy, if I had saved her life, an' was a little more her style than what I be, an' had treated her as ye done last time we was here, I'd step right out now an' ask her pardon—yes, if all the Morgans this side o' Hades was waiting for me with automatic rifles an' duck guns."

"She's still coming this way," said Archie, in a shaky voice.

"Let's git onto our feet an' go to meet her!" exclaimed Andy. "Ye've got somethin' to say to her, as well as to the chief, I reckon. If I was ye I'd cut the chief right out an' do all my business with the young lady."

"Come on—and if you get shot it's your own fault," said Archie, jumping to his feet and stepping out from the shelter of the stable. Andy followed him. They had not moved more than a dozen paces, and had just slipped over the first fence, when Jessie Morgan caught sight of them.

She uttered a little cry of dismay, and the color flashed from her face for a moment. She ceased to advance, but she did not turn back. Archie lifted his cap somewhat sheepishly and continued to hurry forward, with Andy beside him.

They carried their clubs. An Indian farmhand stepped out of one of the outhouses, saw the intruders, and ran toward them, whistling shrilly. Three cross-bred shaggy dogs, as high in the shoulder and almost as long of jaw as collies, appeared in answer to the whistle. And now the action of the scene moved more swiftly. The redman, still running, pointed out the intruders to the dogs and cried them on to the attack. They yelped and sailed over the nearest fence like birds. The Maliseet scrambled after them, shouting encouragement. Jessie ran forward and vaulted the fence of the yard, all the time crying out to the Indian and the dogs in Maliseet with an angry voice. And the two young men continued to run toward the girl, and went over the second fence before the dogs reached them. Just as the dogs sprang, all three together, the chief and Jessie's mother rushed into

view from the kitchen door, closely followed by the cook and the scullery boy.

Archie and the guide swung their long clubs of maple, and two of the dogs dropped and slunk aside with yowls of pain, rage, and astonishment; but the third struck Archie in mid air and slashed him with its slabbering jaws. Its glistening fangs caught in the man's left shoulder, tearing the coat, the thin shirt, and the flesh. It was about to drop and jump again, when Archie let fall his club for a moment, seized the beast's shaggy throat with his right hand, and flung it to the ground. The Mali-seet arrived at that moment; but Flemming rushed at him with an oath, and he turned and ran.

Jessie came on, running like a bird and vaulting the fences. She cried out angrily at the slinking, snarling dogs and retreating Indian. Old Morgan, advancing furiously but not swiftly, bellowed to her to stop—to come back. The girl paid no attention to the chief. She snatched the club from Archie's hand and dashed at the dogs. They stood for a second, then tucked their tails between their legs and fled. Jessie turned to MacElroy. She breathed quickly, and her face was crimson. She

looked at his shoulder. Her eyes did not lift to his.

"Why—have you come back?" she asked.

"To beg your pardon—for the way I spoke when I was last here—and to thank you for what you did for me," replied Archie warmly.

"I behaved disgracefully," said the girl, still gazing at his torn shoulder. "I—I'm ashamed of myself—for having believed that thing of you—for a moment. But—I don't understand; I know that you told me the truth—and yet—I have seen the paid check—indorsed by you."

"And still you believe in me?" cried Archie, advancing a step.

"Yes," she said firmly, lifting her eyes to his face for an instant. "I believe you—but I don't understand."

"I can explain the check," said Archie, his voice thick with the stress of the emotions that surged in him. "I have come to explain it to both of you. Will you shake hands before I explain?"

Her eyes met his fairly now and she extended her hand.

"Look out!" exclaimed Andy. "Here he is—with a revolver."

"Hands off!" roared Morgan. "Away with you or I'll shoot."

Archie lost color; but he did not flinch or loose his hold of Jessie's hand. Andy turned upon the chief, club raised, and warned him be careful what he was about.

"Please go," whispered the girl with gray lips.

"He may shoot. He is not himself when he's in a rage."

She pulled her hand away from him and stood fairly between him and Morgan, facing the old man. She trembled with excitement. Morgan lowered the weapon and swore violently, chokingly. His face worked with rage or with an effort to control the rage.

"Move aside!" he ordered. "You forget yourself—and what you owe to your family. I will deal with this fellow in my own way."

"Easy with that pistol," said Andy, "or I'll let ye have this club where it'll do ye most good. I mean it; an' after the way ye set them hired thugs

onto us, to murder us in the canoe, I wouldn't mind hittin' ye a crack."

"What's that?" bellowed the chief, turning upon the guide.

"I said it," replied Andy grimly. "Ye needn't holler about it. When next I tell it it'll be to a police magistrate, ye white-whiskered old devil!"

Jessie and the chief stared at the guide. The guide glared back at the chief. Archie stepped forward from behind the girl and extended the wad of paper money to the old man.

"Here is that money," he said quietly.

The old man continued to stare at Andy Fleming and paid no heed to Archie and the money; but the girl, who had turned at the first word, gazed at the bills in Archie's hand with wide-eyed wonder—and with a shadow of fear behind the wonder.

"Here," said Archie sharply. "Take your five hundred dollars."

Morgan turned slowly, eyed the money, then the young man's face. A slow, sneering smile lifted his white mustache and gleamed in his eyes. But he did not take the money.

"Keep it," he said. "You have earned it by your magnificent lies. So you've twice earned it, you see. Now clear out of my sight—and out of the sight of this young woman. Don't you understand? You are not only a liar now, but a self-acknowledged liar."

The girl gasped, and Flemming looked at his friend and employer in amazement. Archie turned to the girl.

"It is a bitter thing to explain; but you must know the truth," he said quietly. "The check was——"

"Explain!" shrieked the chief, who had controlled his ever-rising rage until a temporary madness was bred in his brain. "Explain! Take this, you liar and son of a liar!"

He jerked up his right hand and fired.

CHAPTER XIV

JESSIE TELLS SOME UNPLEASANT TRUTHS

Archie MacElroy staggered back a few paces. Jessie screamed. Andy Flemming hurled his club of maple, and the chief let fall his arm and the revolver with a snort of pain.

"My God!" exclaimed Archie, white to the lips, "you—are beyond hoping for. Andy, pick up the revolver or he'll murder the lot of us."

Andy snatched the weapon from the ground. Morgan made no motion to stop him, but stood holding his right wrist in his left hand and gazing at MacElroy with the look of a man suddenly aroused from sleep. Archie glared back at him, swaying a little on his feet.

"Do you think I'd take the trouble to explain anything to you—you miserable, treacherous, murderous coward?" he said.

Jessie came close to him, laid a supporting hand

on each arm, and looked into his face with horror-stricken eyes.

"Are you hit?" she whispered.

"Nothing serious, I think," replied Archie, his eyes still upon the old man with an expression of scorn and disgust. "He can't shoot straight, thank Heaven. Flesh wound only, I think—up here where the dog bit me. Miss Morgan, it is my duty to take you away from here—you and your mother. You are not safe here. This thing may murder you in your beds any night. I know what I'm speaking of. You saw him fire at me point-blank, and we were ambushed and fired at on the main river on our way up yesterday. He is dangerous—a menace to everyone. He is mad—or a devil! You must come away from here."

"Ambushed?" cried the girl.

"Ambushed," repeated the chief stupidly.

"Will you come?" asked Archie. "You know what he is. Will you come?"

"What about this ambush?" asked the chief in a strained voice.

"You shut up, ye old hypocrite!" yelled Andy Flemming. "What about the ambush? says you."

By the jumpin' thunder, I could brain ye for that—an' the skunks ye sent down-river to murder us hidin' in yer house this very minute like as not! Who owned the duck-gun? ye'll be askin' next, curse ye! They blew a hole clean through the canoe—an' we come nigh ketchin' two of 'em—Flint an' Bean; but they got away upstream in a boat. An' the Injun beat it up the bank. Now, d'ye know?"

"Flint and Bean," said Morgan dully. "Man, are you telling the truth? What would they be shooting at you for? And an Indian? I tell you it was no Indian from this reservation."

Andy snarled at him. Archie smiled grimly.

"If you were shot at," said the girl, "I swear to you that the chief had nothing to do with it. Who are Flint and Bean?"

"Perhaps you are ready to swear that he did not shoot at me now?" retorted Archie bitterly. "Oh, he is a gentle and honorable soul!"

Jessie's face flamed and her eyes darkened.

"Let me see your shoulder—and dress it," she said with a sob.

"It's nothing," said Archie quickly. "Andy can

fix it later. To be quite frank with you, I feel nervous about staying here any longer. Our luck at escaping death by a hairbreadth can't last much longer. Will you and your mother come away with us?"

"We are safe, thank you," said the girl in a constrained voice.

"In that case, Andy and I will beat a retreat," replied Archie coldly. "By the way, here's your money," and he threw the packet of bills in the old man's face. "I have nothing more to say of it than that the check was received and cashed without my knowledge and that I did not indorse it. Come along, Andy—and keep a sharp lookout."

The chief swore, but did not move. A white flame leaped in his eyes. The young men turned and moved slowly away.

"You are wrong!" cried the girl. "He knew nothing of the ambush!"

Archie turned his head for a second.

"You saw him fire at me, and I was unarmed," he said.

"But he did not fire a second shot."

"Andy saw to that."

The intruders vanished behind the barns. The packet of bills lay at Morgan's feet. Jessie picked it up and looked dully at the bills, that black shadow of pain still in her eyes. She raised her head and looked at Morgan. Her lips trembled suddenly and tears sprang to the surface of her eyes and glistened on her cheeks.

"Why did you fire at him?" she asked wearily. "You tried to kill him, I think. You are not a murderer at heart. Are you really mad?"

"God knows!" replied the old man. "That fellow brings the devil to the top in me every time. But I don't want his blood on my hands. He should not have tried to explain about that money. His impudence maddens me! The very fact that he brought the money back proves that he was lying when he was here before."

"He was not lying," answered the girl sharply. "He knew nothing of the money until he got home. Didn't you hear him say that he did not cash the check—nor indorse it?"

"I heard him say it. Then some one forged his signature. Are you fool enough to believe that, Jessie Morgan?"

"Yes—if he says so. Be careful, or you'll bring on another fit of insanity—and perhaps try to kill me. I almost believe he was right in warning me and offering to take me away."

The old man's face worked violently, and Jessie saw that she had hit a tender spot. But she did not relent. Resentment against the world in general, against Morgan in particular, glowed in her. And she felt a fear that she did not understand, but she knew that it was not of the old man.

"He offered to take you away!" cried the chief. "What right has he to make such an offer to you? Tell me that, girl! Call him back. I want to settle this matter now—forever. Call him back!"

"I'll not call him back," retorted Jessie, with spirit. "You are not to be trusted. They were wise to go away when they did."

"Perhaps you think that I arranged the ambush they spoke of?"

"No, but why do you believe there was an ambush? You say that Mr. MacElroy is a liar."

"They both mentioned the ambush."

"Why do you hate him so?"

"Because of his father—and for his own sake a little."

"What do you know of his father? Who is he? What has he done to you?"

The chief's face darkened, and he stepped close to Jessie and glared down at her with glowing eyes. He did not tell her what Ian MacElroy had done to him, or where or when they had met; but he poured forth a stream of invectives against the captain that horrified the girl and caused her to draw away from him. His voice fairly rasped and curdled with the hate that blistered him. A sudden light came to the girl.

"If the man is as bad as that, isn't he bad enough to forge? Doesn't that explain—this money?"

Morgan stared and blinked his eyes. She saw that he was taken aback. He began to bluster uncertainly, but she knew that he believed her theory to be correct. She had no doubt of it herself.

"Like father, like son," snarled the chief. "The old man would forge a signature, of course. Nothing is too low for him. On the other hand, the young man would lie with equal readiness. So who's to say what happened? Not you, certainly,

who know nothing of these people—and wilfully blind your eyes to their faults. Leave it at that. You take altogether too much interest in this young whelp of a MacElroy. Shame upon you! Never again let me hear you mention his name. Do you understand?"

"I shall mention his name whenever I want to, to you or anyone else," she replied. "Do you think I'm a slave—or a child? And I'll tell you now, you are a mean-spirited, evil-tempered, detestable old man. You tried to kill young MacElroy simply because you hate his father—and yet you pretend to think that the father did not indorse that check just so that you can keep up your insane rage against the son. Manly, isn't it? Honorable! And what right had you to send him the check, anyway? I'm ashamed of you. You are a coward and a cheat, for all your bluster. *You*, the head of the Morgan family! My poor, unsuccessful father was twenty times the man you are!" she concluded, her eyes flashing.

The chief shook from head to foot with rage. The surging of his fury twisted his face, tweaked his muscles, and set his nerves twanging like taut

wires in a wind. And yet what could he do? He was childless, and he loved this girl as he would have loved a son or daughter of his own. And she was a Morgan—and in the bottom of his boiling heart he was proud of her. This same spirit in her that set his rage to smoking was pure Morgan spirit. She had the courage of an angel—fallen or otherwise—and all the Morgans had been courageous.

“Silence!” he roared. “You forget to whom you are speaking. You forget—a great many things—which I’m above reminding you of.”

“I forget nothing. I hate you! I blush for you!”

“Hate me? Blush for me? Shame! This is outrageous. This is unbelievable. You shall be locked in your room for this and fed on bread and water. You shall be punished severely. I’ll tell your mother to whip you.”

“I’d like to see her try it—or you, either.”

“You dare to speak to me like that—after all I’ve done for you?” His voice faltered. “You call me a liar and a coward! Lord, that I should have put up with this from any one! And I’ll not

put up with it. If my wrist was not broken, I'd—I'd chastise you with my own hands."

"Come on! Try it!"

"My wrist is broken, I tell you."

"Serves you right. You tried to kill an unarmed man. And still you call yourself a Morgan—and a gentleman! If it was not so monstrous it would be laughable. No wonder Archie MacElroy despises you—and all of us!"

This was more than the chief could find a verbal retort for. He gripped Jessie's shoulder with his left hand and marched her off toward the house. The girl did not struggle. She stifled her sobs, but the tears rolled down her cheeks. The frightened mother, who had been hiding all this time in the kitchen, met them at the door. The chief explained matters—partially. Jessie said nothing. The old man marched the girl up-stairs and into her own bedroom, the mother following with a white face and fluttering heart. Here is the end of it, thought the poor woman desperately. She saw want and starvation staring her in the face. And yet she had seen these two fight before many times. She was the kind who could live a hundred years

without learning anything unusual. She knew no more of the chief's real nature now than she did when she first set eyes on him.

Morgan thrust the girl into the room, then shut the door and turned the key in the lock. He stepped back from the door, glared at it in silence for a minute, then sighed profoundly. His face cleared. He looked down at the frightened woman beside him and wagged his head.

"She was not properly brought up," he said. "She needed a strong hand when she was young. It's the Morgan spirit. Thank Heaven mine was curbed when I was young—by strong parents! Otherwise, it would have mastered me in mature years. But don't let it worry you, my dear. If you cannot manage her, I can."

In the meantime Archie MacElroy and Andy Flemming returned to their hidden boat and outfit. They had not been ambushed on the way. Andy cut away the left sleeve of Archie's coat and shirt, examined the wounds, and bathed them in spring-water. The bullet had done little more than nick the flesh of the shoulder, but the fangs of the dog had torn two long gashes.

"Let's get across the river as quick as we can," said Archie. "We can hide there and yet keep a lookout on the reservation, and you'll be able to fix up my arm at your leisure. Those bites need more than cold water, I think."

So they rushed the boat into the water and the outfit into the boat. They took their places cautiously because of the crankiness of that boat, which outshone the crankiness of the narrowest and roundest canoe ever built, and paddled across the river and about two miles down-stream. Again they hid the boat well up from the edge of the water. They carried their outfit far up the steep bank and established themselves in a tiny natural clearing on the slope from which they could look up and down the river, unseen themselves.

"We must have a little fire," said Archie. "We want something hot, and I'll feel more comfortable in my mind when these bites are burned."

So Andy lit a very small fire with the driest wood he could find in a thick clump of spruces. What little smoke there was lost itself among the thick branches. Archie heated the blade of his knife in the clear flame and cauterized the wounds

made by the fangs of the dog. Andy looked on at the operation with a drawn face and frank admiration in his eyes. When it was finished he sighed with relief.

"I reckon that took some doin'," he said.

"Worse than a visit to a dentist," replied Archie, thrusting the hot blade of the knife into the moss. "Now, if you'll tie it up with this handkerchief, we'll call it done."

They brewed a kettle of tea, drank, ate, and smoked their pipes, with a keen outlook on the river all the while.

"I guess that old chief is clean off his runners," said Andy.

"I'm not sure if he's mad or bad," replied Archie; "but what gets me is the way that girl believes in him. She accepted his denial of the ambush—yes, right after seeing him fire point-blank at me."

"I wouldn't swing round ag'in about that girl if I was you," retorted the guide hardily. "She acted square. She told you that she didn't believe anything mean about you in honest English—and ye shook hands on it. Would ye go back on that

just because she thinks a mite better of the old man than what we do? Anyhow, she knows him better than we do. She took yer word about that money—just like I do. She's the finest in the Province, she is—an' she's yer friend. An' if ye don't know it, then ye're a bigger fool than ye look."

CHAPTER XV

JESSIE MORGAN ESCAPES

Archie looked at the guide, then quickly away. His face flushed.

"You are right, Andy," he said, with a catch in his voice. "She's the finest in the country—and more than that; but I wish to Heaven she was safely out of that old maniac's house! She doesn't realize what a dangerous character he is."

"What d'ye figger on doin' now?" asked Fleming. "No sense tryin' to git to the big timber on the headwaters with this outfit."

"We'll wait right here for a while and keep our eyes open," said the boss. "I feel it in my bones that something will happen. Those two may need us—Miss Morgan and her mother; or Flint and Bean may turn up. We can't clear out now, Andy, without knowing what's going to happen next. I—we won't desert that girl."

"Sure we won't," replied the other.

So they established themselves as well as they could on the high and wooded bank, across the river from the reservation and two miles below it, and waited and watched. The hours dragged. Archie bathed his wounded shoulder frequently in a little ice-cold stream that welled out of the moss and trickled down to the river. They smoked a great deal, and Jim Samson's potent tobacco kept the mosquitoes and black flies at a respectful distance.

Back in Chief Morgan's big house Jessie lay face down on her bed for a long time. The grip of the old man's long fingers still tingled on her shoulder; and now, alone, she felt fear of him for the first time. She had said unpardonable things to him. He would disinherit her this time surely. She and her mother would be homeless—and at that thought a pang of remorse and terror went through her heart. And yet she had been honest. If she had not said those things to her guardian and benefactor she would have been a liar—the worst kind of a liar—the liar of the guarded lips and silent tongue. She could excuse herself, but she could not expect the chief to excuse her—this

time. He had forgiven her many things many times, and had treated her as if they had never been said; but this time she had called him—well, she shivered to think of what she had called him. And yet he had deserved every word of it. She had seen him fire at an unarmed man.

She left the bed at last and washed her face in cold water. Then she sat down by the window to try to plan for the future. She should have to find some work that she might support herself and her mother. She knew the chief well enough to know that her mother was safe for the immediate future, but she did not feel so sure about her own case. She must escape and go to Archie MacElroy. He was to be trusted. He would understand. He would help her get work. She blushed at the thought—and beyond this her plans for the future did not go. She now gave all her attention to a scheme for immediate escape from the room and the house. She looked out of the window into the branches of a tall spruce, and her eyes brightened.

She leaned on the window-ledge and glanced to the right and left and straight down. The grass

of the lawn was scanty and thin beneath the wide shade of the spruce-tree. She knew the spot well, for with the additions of cushions and a book it made a comfortable retreat on a warm afternoon. She gazed down now at the circle of brown shadow with a new interest. So, for a little while, and then she looked straight across at the tree. It stood about twenty-five feet from the window; but it was a big tree, and the branches—even at the height of the window—swept to within fifteen feet of the sill. The sunshine fell through the green spire in golden shafts and warmed the rough brown bole. It looked homely and secure.

Off Jessie's bedroom was a small room which she and her mother used for a box-room. Three trunks were in it now, and a small packing-box that had contained books. This box had been strongly roped; it had been unpacked where it now stood, and the rope lay on the floor. It was a stout, rough cord of the variety commonly called "clothes-line." Jessie untangled it and looked it over critically. Then she coiled it neatly and laid it on top of the box.

Jessie heard the key grate in the lock of the

door. She sat down in a chair beside her bed. The door opened and the old Maliseet woman who did the sweeping and dusting entered with a tray in her hands. On the tray were a jug of water, a glass, and a plate of dry bread. The squaw placed the tray on the floor, wagged her head solemnly at the girl, and retired, locking the door behind her.

Jessie sat motionless for a long time, gazing at the bread and water with a wan smile. The chief had said bread and water, and bread and water it was. So far he had done what he had threatened to do. He had never made good a threat before. She felt that her worst fears were confirmed, and that desperate measures were called for on her part. Up to now she had half expected the chief to arrive in person at any moment and try to make peace; but now she knew that she would not be called upon to face that embarrassment. She thought she felt relieved. In reality she felt dismally neglected.

The reviving spirit of adventure soon came back to her, and she moved once more to the window and looked out. She thought of Archie Mac-

Elroy and felt a fine glow of courage. She thought of how he had saved her from the icy grasp of the swollen river; of his honest eyes and the strong clasp of his hand; of his face with the hot flush of indignation upon it; of his fearlessness before the chief's revolver; of his request for her to go away with him. All these things went before her mind's eye in clear, quick pictures as she stood at the window and looked out at the mellow sunlight on lawn and tree. By the quality of the light she knew that the day was wearing along toward evening. She looked at the watch on her wrist and saw that it was after three o'clock, turned from the window, with her lips set determinedly, lifted the tray from the floor to a little table, drank a glass of the water, and ate most of the dry bread. It was good bread, however, and her appetite was keen. After that she changed her skirt for a shorter one, and her shoes for high-legged laced boots, made up a bundle of a few clothes, brush and comb, tooth-brush, soap, and powder-box. She put her few trinkets and rings in her purse, and the purse in the pocket of her woolen skirt.

A soft, heavy step sounded again at the door, and again the key clicked in the lock. Again the big squaw entered, and again she held a tray in her hand. This tray carried buttered toast, a few slices of cold chicken, and a dish of strawberry jam and cream. Jessie stared.

"The chief, he say maybe you get hungry," said the squaw. She eyed the girl in wonder. "What you t'ink?" she queried. "You go fishin'?"

"I expect to go for a walk, as soon as the chief lets me out of this room," replied Jessie.

"He begin to get sorry, yes," said the woman. "But he say he won't let you out to-night, anyhow. He carve this chicken himself."

"Thanks, very much," said Jessie in a small voice.

The squaw retired. Jessie paced the floor with quick steps and a flushed face. So the old man was already forgiving and forgetting! He was sorry for what he had done! She felt a sudden pity for him, then a new quality of anger against him, and a new scorn.

"Very well," she said. "Let him be sorry. I

will teach him a lesson this time he shall not soon forget."

She returned to the window and measured the distance from the sill to the big spruce with a brooding eye. Half her mind busied itself with her plans of escape, the other half considered the chief. She thought wrathfully and scornfully of the old man. He who had fired a revolver at the unarmed MacElroy, for no reason that she could see, was already forgiving her for the things she had said to him—for things which no self-respecting man should ever forgive from any one.

"He must have more the matter with his head than that devilish temper," she reflected. "I'll show him that I neither want nor need the forgiveness of a man like that. He must beg Archie's pardon."

She took a heavy brass candlestick from her dressing-table and tied one end of the rope firmly around the middle of it. The gold of the sunlight deepened. She sat by the window and watched the shadows lengthen. An amber twilight flooded the lawns and spires of the forest. She began to feel decidedly nervous, and to hearten

herself she moved back into the room and drank more water and ate some of the chicken and toast. She went to the door and listened. The house was silent. The dusk gathered slowly in the wide branches of the spruce outside her window. She lifted her bundle and dropped it out of the window. It struck the ground with a soft thump and rolled into the shadow beneath the tree. She took up the rope and grasped one end of it within a few feet of the candlestick. The window was long, and its sill was within two feet of the floor. It was wide open. Jessie stood close to the window and began to swing the candlestick on the end of the rope. She swung it so that it just grazed the floor, and in its upward curve just cleared the window-sill by an inch. So she swung it back and forth five or six times and at last let it fly from her hand. The heavy candlestick soared upward and outward, twitching the light rope after it. She stepped forward and looked up at its flight, holding the slack of the rope in her left hand.

The candlestick crashed into the branches of the spruce high above the level of the window. It caught for a second, then dropped a foot or two.

Again it lodged for a moment, only to slip and fall again. Then it went bouncing downward from branch to branch and finally hit the ground. Jessie drew it back to her with circumspection, for the window directly below her belonged to the dining-room. This was one of her reasons for not making the rope fast inside the room and attempting to descend to the ground hand under hand. She had pictured herself descending slowly in front of that long window, twirling on the rope, perhaps even striking against the glass with her feet or knees. Such a thing would be fatal to her plans, for the chief often sat in the dining-room at this hour while the table was being laid for dinner. But this was not her only reason for not trying to escape by the shortest and straightest course. The foundation wall of the house was high, and the rooms on the lower floor were as high as those of any city house, so the distance from her room to the ground was considerable. And the palms of her hands were tender. She was afraid of detection by the chief or one of the servants, and she was even more afraid of letting the small, harsh rope slip in her hands and of making the descent

at full speed. So she had chosen the slower way of escape. She leaned far out and to one side and drew the candlestick back to her at arm's length so that it did not cross the window below.

Again Jessie threw the candlestick, this time with considerably more force than before. It entered the spire of green and stuck where it struck. She pulled downward gently on the rope. It gave an inch or so, then held tight. She pulled harder. She shifted her position and the slant of the rope and pulled again. Still it held. Then she jerked. She jerked on it with her whole weight. The candlestick had swung a hitch over the butt of one of those sturdy branches. There could be no mistake about that.

A broad ray of lamplight flooded from the dining-room window to the lawn at the foot of the tree. The curtains were never drawn at that window. Jessie crawled cautiously out upon the window-sill, with the rope in her hands. Her heart was beating like a hammer. It felt as if it had climbed into her throat. Her lips were dry. She stood up gingerly and shortened the rope in her hands until her arms were high above her head.

She pressed backward against the upper sash, with a shoulder against the frame, closed her eyes, and passed the slack of the line around her back and breast, just under the arms. She passed it around three times, then knotted it where her right hand gripped it. Then, with her eyes still shut tight, and gripping the rope above her desperately with both hands, she sprang smoothly out from the window.

The passage between the window and tree was accomplished in a second of time; but during that second she heartily regretted her determination to run away from the house of the chief. But when she broke briskly yet softly into the foliage of the tree her courage leaped up again, her heart took up its work again, and her brain cleared. She sank her face against her arms, for its protection, and continued to crush slowly through the yielding boughs. She brought up against the trunk of the tree with a thump that knocked her breathless for a half-second, then she loosed her fingers from the rope and clasped the rough bole of the tree in her arms. She found a foothold on a branch below her, cleared the rope from about her body, squirmed

around until the trunk of the tree was between herself and the lighted window, then lowered herself swiftly from branch to branch, and finally dropped to the soft turf. She found her bundle of clothes and slipped away in the darkness. She ran, taking a way which she knew well. Ten minutes later she rapped softly on the door of old Noel Sacobie.

CHAPTER XVI

SACOBIE SPEAKS WISDOM

The old Maliseet himself opened the door and peered cautiously out into the summer night. He grunted at sight of Jessie Morgan. With the latch in his hand he glanced over his shoulder. His ancient squaw was hunched in a chair beside the stove on which the supper had been so recently fried, smoking her pipe and wrapped in thought and rank smoke. So Noel slipped out of the cabin and closed the door behind him. Jessie laid a hand on his arm.

"Noel, I'm going away," she whispered. "The chief is angry at me."

"Ugh!" commented the old child of nature.

"Did you see a canoe or a boat anywhere on the river to-day?"

"I see plenty canoe. I see me own,—yes—an' Jim Portenous."

"I don't mean that. Did you see young Archie MacElroy and his guide?"

"Yep. He got a boat this time. He go down stream, him an' Andy, an' land 'bout two mile down, on t'other shore. Yep, Noel see him."

"You get your paddles, Noel, and take me to MacElroy in your canoe."

"You want to go 'way with MacElroy, maybe? What? You run 'way?"

"Yes."

"That foolishness. What for you run 'way with him? You tell."

"I won't. Why should I explain to you, Noel? You are my friend."

Noel Sacobie was a soft-hearted old redskin. Also, he was wise, as an old man should be. But he was wiser than the majority of ancients, and he knew both Jessie and the chief very well indeed. Also he hated tears. He thought swiftly. True, Jessie was his friend; but so was the chief. Was he more afraid of Jessie's tears than of the chief's rage? Yes, he rather thought he was. Old Morgan's bellowings blew away like an April flurry, but the memories of tears lingered to fret

one's sleep. Anyway, the chances were good that he might comply with the girl's request and at the same time save the situation, which sounded serious. He was not ignorant of the fact that Morgan and Jessie often squabbled; but evidently they had gone farther than usual this time. He knew Archie MacElroy favorably, by repute.

"A' right," he said. "Me tak' you. Come along."

They passed down through the humble habitations of the tribe without being seen or heard. The old man went ahead, like a shadow, on his moccasined feet. From a general magazine of paddles he drew two of his own manufacture. He lifted his canoe from a thicket and launched it upon the black water without a sound. Jessie stepped aboard and sat down in the bow. The canoe slipped out upon the breast of the stream like a blacker shadow. Noel Sacobie stroked once, twice, then held the blade of the paddle silent in the water and turned his head a little.

"Hark!" he whispered. "You hear somethin'?"

Jessie heard. Through the windless dark came

faintly a wordless bellow of rage and consternation. Jessie gasped, then laughed nervously.

"It's the chief," she said. "He locked me into my bedroom, you know, and now I think he has learned of my escape. Isn't he furious?"

"Ugh!" replied Noel Sacobie, and went on with his paddling.

For some time the sounds continued behind them. Dogs yelped, a gun was fired, the voice of the chief floated thick on the warm air. Other voices took up the cry. More dogs barked.

"Guess he start every one huntin' round for you," said Noel.

"I guess so," said the girl, somewhat faintly. The sounds were daunting. She pictured the old chief's rage with a shiver. The distance seemed to make it more formidable. Noel Sacobie understood and grinned.

"Guess you learn him somethin', sure 'nough," he said, and dipped his paddle with increased force. "Guess he got one a'mighty scare this time, a'right. Do him good, maybe. What?"

Jessie did not answer. She was wondering.

They did not cross the river just then, but slipped swiftly down the near shore. Noel Sacobie could see no landmarks, but he kept count of the distance in his mind, and now and again ran the canoe into shallow water and felt about with his paddle. By the touch of mud, sand, or rock he learned his exact position. At last, though no light showed for a guide, he swung the bow away from the shore and started straight across the narrow river.

"MacElroy land somewheres 'long here," he said. "If he don't go 'way a'ready he here still, what? When we get close to shore you give one little holler. If I holler, maybe them fellers git scart an' shoot."

A minute later Jessie hailed the black loom of the bank ahead in a feeble and uncertain voice.

"Hullo!" she called. "Hullo! It is Jessie Morgan. Are you there?"

After a brief silence, during which Noel did not stir the paddle, the voice of Archie MacElroy answered from the darkness.

"Is it you? What is the trouble? Are you alone?"

"Noel Sacobie is with me. I have run away," said Jessie.

A light flamed among the spruces. Andy had lighted a roll of bark. The red and yellow flame moved down toward the shore. Sacobie sent the canoe forward with a few twisting strokes of the paddle, and as the nose of it touched the sand the two young men laid hands upon it. Their faces looked white and strained to the girl in the angry glare of the bark torch. To them her face gleamed white and miserable. They steadied the canoe and she stepped ashore, in so doing resting her right hand for a moment on Archie's shoulder. Noel Sacobie followed at his leisure and smiled composedly at the young men.

"You best put out that flare," he said. "Morgan, he on the jump, red-hot, lookin' for this here Jessie. Maybe got one-two canoe on the river a'ready, huntin' for her."

"Did he hurt you?" asked Archie in a violent whisper. "I was afraid of that. Did he dare to offer you physical violence?"

At that moment Andy dropped the torch to the ground and set his foot on it. Darkness flooded

in upon them. The girl's shoulder nudged accidentally against MacElroy's arm. It was swiftly withdrawn a few inches. Noel Sacobie grunted and stumbled over a root.

"He didn't hurt me," said Jessie. "He locked me into my room, and said that I was to have nothing to eat but bread and water. But he soon relented and sent some cold chicken up to me."

Andy Flemming laughed. Perhaps Noel Sacobie laughed also, but he had a trick of laughing without sound.

"Cold chicken?" repeated Archie vacantly. "And—why did you run away?" His hand went out slowly, fearfully, and encountered her sleeve. After trembling there for a second or two, uncertainly, the fingers took a tender hold on the round, young arm inside the sleeve. The arm did not move.

"I was really afraid of him this time—at first," replied Jessie with a note of abstraction in her voice. "Until I saw that he was beginning to relent, I was really afraid. I said terrible things to him this time. And I want to teach him a lesson. I want you to know that—that since I saw him fire the shot at you I—I cannot live with him

any more. So I escaped from my room by way of the window. When he fired at you I hated him; but I'm not afraid of him."

"You ran away to escape with me?" queried the young man, his fingers tightening a little on her arm. "Is that why? Please tell me."

"I came to tell you that I do not feel in the least the way he feels toward you," she replied. "I was afraid that you might think I believed something against you. But I don't believe anything against you. I did once, for only a little while, but I never shall again. I know you are honest—as honest as the day—and brave. I came to tell you so—yes, and to escape with you. I knew you would help me to get away."

"Jessie," he whispered, leaning very close to her in the dark.

"You hol' on one minute," said the old Maliseet. "Noel Sacobie got somethin' to say, you bet. Jessie here, she one fine girl. She fight with Morgan a'mighty fierce, two-three time every week, maybe. An' Chief Morgan, he fight back. A'right. No one git hurt, anyhow. She got that same devil temper, like chief; but she never fight any one not so big an'

strong like herself. She always right, Morgan always wrong. Anyhow, Morgan never keep mad. He like Jessie too much for to keep sore. He like her like his own girl, yes; an' he put down all his money for her when he die. That right. He tell me so. He never hurt her no matter how mad he git. But I guess he maybe git so mad if she run away with you, Archie MacElroy, he write down some other business on his will an' make her an' the ol' woman two beggars. What? You bet. Now you wait. Noel Sacobie ain't done. You like Archie, what? An' Archie like you, what? You bet. But Morgan he don't like Archie too much, 'cause he don't like Archie's ol' man. That don't matter none! He like you when he know you a'right. He shot at you—well, he don't try to hit you. He just mad. He do that at me one-two time. A'right. Best t'ing you do, you go home—all of us—an' you go right up to the chief, you Archie, an' tell him you don't want no trouble, but you jist as good as him an' he best shoot you quick if he want to, 'cause if he don't you goin' to be frien's with him. That fix him."

The others had listened attentively to the old

man—even Jessie and Archie. Andy said that he hadn't heard so much horse-sense in a month of Sundays, and he backed the old Maliseet's suggestion of an immediate return to the house of the chief. Archie did not know exactly what to think or say. His brain was in a tumult and his heart was behaving in a most distressing manner. He clung to the girl's arm.

"Jessie, what does it mean?" he whispered.

"What?" she breathed back. "What Sacobie said?"

"You. Your wanting to run away like this. Tell me."

"I don't know. I think Sacobie is right about going back, for your sake. The chief would not attack you again. I'm sure, and I have no right to bother you. I'm not afraid of the chief."

"What you two whisper about?" asked Noel Sacobie fretfully.

"Jessie, do you trust me?" asked Archie in a mere shred of a whisper that was safe even against the Maliseet's ears.

"Yes, absolutely."

"You wonder! But I love you. Love you, Jessie—utterly!"

"Why?" she asked. It wasn't exactly what she intended to say, but it seems that at a time like this it does not matter much what one says or whether or not one says anything at all. Archie had sense enough to know this. He paid no heed to the girl's question, but slipped his arm around her slender waist, safe from the eyes of the woodsmen in that thick, warm darkness. He held her tight to him and stooped his head, and she, as luck would have it, lifted her face at the same moment.

Old Noel Sacobie could not see in the dark; but he had an extra sense which enabled him to feel things without using his hands.

He remarked: "This too foolish. Andy Fleming, we best go 'way, back to the chief, afore he get so a'mighty mad he blow up. No good here. Dern pity, too; but Noel Sacobie say all he got to say. He nothin' but one darn ol' fool, maybe. A'right. Come on."

"Sure," said Andy in a loud voice. "No use stayin' here an' talkin' sense to folks who won't listen to ye."

"Jessie, I'm ready to do whatever you say."

"I will do whatever you say, Archie."

"It is for you to say."

"I'm not afraid of the chief except for you."

"Then I'm not afraid of him. He has called me a sneak, so I'd like to go back and tell him this to his face. Then if he feels like shooting at me again we'll come away. I'm honest, and my love for you is the most honest thing in my life. So I'd like to take you away from him openly—against odds—if you don't object. Do you understand, little girl?"

"Yes. But if he acts dangerously, you'll be careful? You'll run?"

"With you. Yes, I'll not let him shoot me, dear."

"What d'ye mean to do about it?" asked Andy Flemming.

"We'll all go back," said the girl.

The boat and the canoe were launched and occupied in silence. The girl got into the canoe with Noel Sacobie. Archie and Andy left their poor outfit behind them. They could pick it up on their way down river. The two narrow vessels moved

up stream through the warm darkness close together. Once the gunwales touched and Archie leaned sidewise a little, put out his hand swiftly and touched the girl's shoulder. The young man's head and heart were in a whirl. A bewildering sense of glorious possession filled him, shaking the blood in his veins, setting his nerves atingle. Perhaps he had dreamed sometimes of something like this taking place in the dim future; but he had never dreamed that it would be just like this. The adventures of the day were forgotten. The business of life as seen by Messrs. Marsh & West was forgotten. His aching shoulder, the ambush, the treachery of the chief, his father's last dishonorable act—all alike were swept from his mind. He could think of nothing but the girl in the canoe so close to him on the dark river. He could feel nothing but the sense of her nearness. He could remember nothing but the sound and touch of her. He paddled as a man might paddle in a dream.

"Mind yer eye there, boss, or ye'll have this old saucer upside down," cautioned Andy from the stern. "Ye're paddlin' like a cow swishin' flies with her tail."

"Sorry," said Archie. "I wasn't thinking."

Again the canoe and the cobbled boat drew close. Again Archie ceased paddling and put out his hand to the gunwale of the canoe, and there it found one of Jessie's hands. Their fingers clasped. Noel Sacobie grunted fretfully in spite of the fact that he could not see in the dark. He splashed with his paddle.

"She ain't trim," he complained. "What you doin' in the bow?"

Jessie withdrew her fingers from Archie's clasp. The canoe and the boat parted company again by a few feet. Archie dipped his paddle. He laughed suddenly, loudly, joyously. With everything dead against him, he had won her. Think of it. His brief note of laughter rang out like a sort of cheer.

"Ugh!" grunted Noel Sacobie. "You sound like one fool loon a laughin' at nothin' 'way out on the lake."

Then, quick as a flash, Archie thought of something else, and his heart contracted. Very cautiously, so that Andy would not know what he was

about, he slued the bow of the boat over toward the canoe.

"Jessie," he whispered.

"Yes, Archie," she breathed back.

"I did not tell you about my father."

"What about him?"

"It was he who forged my name on that check. It is my duty to tell you, dear. He used to be a brave man, but now he is—not straight."

"Poor boy! But I guessed that it was your father's doing. I am sorry, dear, for your sake; but, as you are straight, what does it matter to me if your father is not?"

"What that?" exclaimed Noel Sacobie. "Look there. Straight ahead."

"A fire, by thunder!" exclaimed Andy Fleming.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KNOCKOUT

At first it looked no more than a little spot of blinking red against the blackness far in front and over on the other shore—against the black loom of forests above the shore. To Jessie Morgan it suggested nothing more formidable than a torch of some kind. She knew nothing of the aspects of fires in the wilderness at night. As it happened, she had never seen even so much as a brush-burning.

“The poor chief,” she said, and laughed with as liquid a note as the song of the swamp-robin. But there was more of joy in her peal of laughter than is to be detected in the brown bird’s song. “He is out hunting for me with a light. Well, he’ll soon find me.”

“Looks as if he lit quite a sizable lantern,” remarked Flemming.

Momentarily the spot of red grew and quick-

ened. It pulsed and wavered against the blackness of the night. It was a thing of life—and of menace. It was not now a round spot of red, but a hand-shaped flame, and to the voyagers on the river it looked no larger than a hand. Even Jessie felt something of the threat and power of it.

"The woods, do you think; or are they burning brush?" asked Archie.

"No brush," replied Sacobie. "The woods, maybe; maybe the house. Dunno. Get a move on. That timber worth a pile of money."

"What house?" asked Jessie in a shaken voice; but even Archie did not hear her, for the men had fallen to work with their paddles as if they paddled in a race. Archie paid no heed to the twinges in his bandaged shoulder, but dug water with the best of them. Though two toiled in the patched boat and only one in the canoe, the light craft of bark drew slowly ahead. The boat, in its present condition, was surely the most exasperating craft that had ever gone up the Blue Bend. It was heavier than a log and more cranky than the narrowest canoe. It was down at the head and evidently had a twist in the keel. It was at once lumpy and

skittish, stubborn and unreliable. Andy swore at it as he heaved it along, churning the black water with his broad paddle.

"Sock it to her!" he cried. "Dig her out of the water! Slosh her along! Sacobie's walkin' right away from us. We'll miss the fun."

He, too, had forgotten about MacElroy's shoulder for the moment. Archie was not so keen about arriving early at the fire as he was about keeping in touch with the canoe containing Jessie Morgan. He set his teeth and swung every ounce of weight and muscle above his hips into the stroke. He paddled with a straight blade, as every good canoeman does when working in the bow. He sank her deep at every stroke until his lower hand went under water to the wrist. He shoveled the black river behind him in chunks—in swirling masses. The boat sheered, wriggled, tried to dive, but they picked her up and slithered her along. So they drew up again to the canoe.

The light ahead was now a tearing, leaping plume of flame. It flung sparks aloft into the blackness overhead in appalling showers. It shed a wavering illumination around itself, painting tall

trees as red as blood. The people on the river could see now that it was the house that burned, beyond a doubt. And they saw, too, that the big woods were in peril—the fine timber that the chief had cherished for so many years. Now and again the windows, chimneys, and gables of the high house showed red against the painted background, above and behind the devouring flame, only to vanish next moment, veiled by the drifting smoke. The eclipsing, unseen smoke threw purple shadows down upon the foreground of the wild scene. Jessie crouched in the bow of the canoe and stared at the horror ahead as if fascinated.

“Cross here,” snapped Noel Sacobie to the men in the boat. “We get ashore an’ run faster nor this.”

The bows of both craft were swung and pointed at an angle across the current. Archie MacElroy allowed his stroke to lose a little in weight. The cruel, sheer pressure of the stroke which he had set himself was wearing his maimed left arm to a nerveless condition. The shoulder throbbed and twinged. Wrist and elbow felt stiff and sore. He paddled on, but he did not sink the broad blade so

deep, nor hurl it back so furiously. His throat was dry. His tongue felt like leather in his mouth. His head began to ache. One idea possessed him now, and that was to keep in touch with the canoe containing Jessie. He had a hazy, hideous picture in his mind of the girl reaching the chief before him and being snatched away from him. So he dug away at the black water, still doing his best to slue that abominable boat along abreast of the canoe.

But his best was not as good as it had been. A sudden wave of faintness went through him; but he gritted his teeth and shook it off. He dropped his right hand into the river and splashed a palmful of water over his eyes and lips. He splashed another handful over the bandaged shoulder. Then he applied himself again to the paddle. Even Andy, sound as a bell and tough as an ax-handle, was slacking off a little in the force of his strokes. No man alive can keep up a racing-stroke for long against the current of the Blue Bend in a boat of that model, patched with driftwood.

"We'll land a bit lower than them," gasped the

guide. "Save time—an' work. Our legs—are good as theirs—anyhow."

The bow of the boat struck the shore. Archie tumbled out, reeled and fell flat, with a little yelp of pain; but he was on his feet again in a second, and plunging through the bushes along the lower slope of the bank, to overtake the girl from the canoe. Andy gave the boat one yank up and out, a kick and a curse, then raced after his friend and boss.

"By Heaven, I forgot about yer shoulder!" he cried in consternation. Jessie, standing beside the canoe which Noel Sacobie had left at the edge of the water, heard the shout and understood. She cried Archie's name, and next moment he came to her, with Andy close at his heels. She clutched Archie's hand. He slipped his right arm around her.

"Your shoulder? Why did you paddle?" she asked.

"By thunder, I clean forgot all about it!" said Andy. "I guess he was afeared the canoe would git away fróm us. How is the shoulder, boss?"

"A bit sore," replied Archie. "Come along, Jes-

sie. We must lend a hand at this fire—and see the chief. Where's Noel Sacobie?"

"He has gone on," said the girl. "Boy, you can scarcely stand! Is the shoulder so bad? Oh, why did you paddle? The house is not worth it!"

"I didn't want the canoe to get away. I was afraid of losing you. I didn't think at all of the fire, though now I'm quite willing to help the old man save his house. I feel charity toward the whole world."

"You're not fit to go. Stay here, boy, and I will stay with you."

"Maybe I'd better go along then," said Andy Flemming.

MacElroy swayed, then sank limply to the ground. The girl dropped to her knees beside him and put her arm behind his shoulders.

"Dizzy, that's all," said Archie unsteadily. "A bit faint."

"Get some brandy—or something of that sort," cried the girl to Flemming. "Perhaps you can get in at the back of the house. Be quick."

Andy ran for it. The girl knelt beside Archie, whispering things to him of a nature easily enough

imagined, now and again touching his face with a trembling hand, waiting and listening. She was tortured with remorse. If he were in danger now it was all her fault. For her sake he had come to the Blue Bend again and been wounded by the dog and the bullet; and for her sake he had used the shoulder violently when it should not have been moved at all. Tears trickled down her cheeks, but she managed to silence her sobs. The young man held one of her hands, and now and then pressed it tenderly against his lips. From where they waited they could hear the horrid roaring of the fire.

"The faintness has passed," said Archie, raising his shoulders from the ground. "It was nothing—and the wounds are only scratches. Let us go up and see what we can do. Come, dear."

He got to his feet, still holding her hand, and she followed his example. She clung to him, and now he knew that she was weeping.

"I'm afraid—for you," she sobbed. "He will be doubly dangerous now, from the excitement of the fire. Let us wait here. Please."

Archie stood looking toward the blazing house

for a second or two, in silence, then turned and pulled the canoe farther up the bank and turned it over. The two sat down on the upturned canoe—a thing which would have called the wrath of Noel Sacobie down upon them had the old man seen it. They sat very close together, and spoke of their first meeting. Jessie told him how she had been hurt by the thought that he had accepted five hundred dollars for saving her life.

“For even then I had made up my mind that you were interested in me,” she confessed. “It made me feel very small, and deserted, when the chief told me about the money which he had sent and you had accepted. I was a brute to believe it for a moment; and I did not believe it after you had once denied it, even when he showed me the endorsed check. But I behaved like a brute to you, boy, that day you came back and we met here by the river. I don’t deserve to be forgiven.”

Archie proved to her that she was forgiven. Then he said: “I wonder why Morgan hates me so. If it is because of my father, why does he hate him? I have never heard my father mention

his name, that I can remember. They must have known one another long ago."

"I am sure they did," she replied. "It is terrible—the chief's hatred of your father. Tell me about your father, boy!"

"You already know that he is a forger," said Archie. "It is hard to talk of him, for, after all, I'm his son. But you have a right to know, dear."

"When he was in the army he was a brave man—at least, he is a V. C. Cowards don't win the V. C., that I've ever heard of. He is selfish and indolent, and he drinks heavily. I don't know what more to tell you about him, dear. If you had known all this at first, would you have been interested in me?"

"Yes," she replied. "I would have known, at the very first, that you had inherited nothing from your father but his courage."

They heard some one approaching through the alders. It proved to be Andy Flemming. Andy returned with empty hands. He told them how he had skirted the illuminated space unseen by the household and the people of the reservation and slipped into the house by way of the kitchen door.

The fire was at the front of the house, licking and tearing from foundation to roof. He had found the kitchen choking with smoke, but had stumbled about, and at last found some sort of pantry. There he had found a couple of bottles; but upon getting out of the house he had discovered one to be full of vinegar and the other of olive oil. He had considered it useless to go back and stumble blindly around again. He had seen that much of the furniture had been saved and now lay in heaps around the house. The chief and the Maliseets had given up all hope of saving the house, he thought, and were working about the barns, which were in grave danger of catching from the sparks. Fortunately, there was no wind, and so the barns and timber ran a fair chance of escaping.

"I'm fit to work," said Archie, getting up from the canoe. "Even if Morgan doesn't like me, and tried to murder me, I can't sit here without trying to help. Come along, dear, and help with the barns and stock. Every one will count at that work."

Jessie consented, though she was afraid. She entertained no fear of the old man for herself, but trembled at the thought of his meeting with Archie.

She knew that at the loss of his house and the danger to his timber, barns and live stock, he would be crazy with excitement. The three had not moved more than ten yards from the shore when Andy halted suddenly and turned.

"Who's there?" he asked sharply. "You, Sacobie?"

He moved toward the shore. The others turned, listening. They heard faint sounds, like the furtive lifting and sliding of a canoe on mud and coarse grass. Then Andy Flemming sprang forward. Archie and Jessie heard a muttered oath and a noise as if Andy had fallen across the canoe. They ran toward the disturbance.

"Light a match, one of you!" exclaimed Flemming.

Archie struck a match and held it up, peering ahead under the little flame. He saw Andy struggling on the ground, half in the water and half out, near Noel Sacobie's canoe. And the canoe had been turned bottom down and moved until two-thirds of its length were in the river.

"It's that old varmint himself!" cried Andy. "It's Bean!"

Archie and Jessie moved closer to the men on the ground, and Archie struck another match. Yes, the guide had the peddler under his knees.

"That's one of the merry fellows who fired two charges of duck shot into our canoe," said Archie to the girl.

"For God's sake, lemme go!" cried Bean. "I'll pay ye. There's a wallet full of money in my pocket. About seven hundred dollars. Take it all—an' leave me go!"

Andy Flemming laughed savagely, arose from his knees and jerked the peddler up by the collar.

"Let ye go, is it?" he said. "Not on yer tin-type, Mr. Bean. Me and Mr. MacElroy here like ye too much for that. Wish we had Flint, too, and the other murderer. We'll just take ye up an' show ye to yer slick friend, Chief Morgan."

"My—don't take me to him," cried the peddler.

Jessie stepped close to Bean. Archie lit another match.

"Tell me, did Morgan set you to shoot these men?" she asked in a voice that trembled with emotion. "Tell me the truth!"

"Morgan?" repeated the peddler, in frank aston-

ishment. "No one set us to do it. Jim Samson done it—an' he's soft-witted."

"There!" exclaimed Jessie.

"Anyhow, we'll jist take him up an' see what the chief has to say about it," said Andy. "If the chief wasn't mixed up in that shootin', then I'd like to know what Bean's doin' here."

Archie went ahead. The girl followed him. The guide dragged the squirming peddler along in the rear. The huts of the reservation were deserted. The red glare of the fire wavered horribly over the bushes and deserted cabins. They passed the village of the Maliseets and the painted woods beyond. They crossed an open field, the rich grass of which was red as a tide of blood. Suddenly, out of the glare and glow in front of them leaped a tall figure. Archie halted uncertainly.

"You!" roared the Chief. "You—you! Back to look at your handiwork, you brazen son of a cur!"

Archie staggered back. The chief struck with his heavy stick. The young man slumped to the red grass at Jessie's feet.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CHIEF BEGINS TO RELENT

Jessie leaped forward with a scream, over Archie's body, and flung herself upon the chief. The old man staggered back from the shock. She snatched the stick from his hands and struck at him wildly. He retreated, dazed by this sudden attack, and flung up his right arm for protection. His right wrist was intensely sore; but it had not been broken by Andy Flemming's club. The stick struck it now fairly, and he yelped with the pain. The girl flung the stick away, turned, and fell to her knees beside her unconscious lover. But Morgan was given no time to make his escape, even if he had intended to get away. Andy Flemming jumped for him, his right hand extended, his left still twisted in the collar of the half-strangled Hedley Bean.

Andy was a big man—and just then he was an angry one. In spite of the drag on his left arm,

he reached the chief in two jumps. His long fingers closed upon the old man's throat. Then, with every ounce of strength in his arms and shoulders and back, he swung the chief and the peddler together. Bean's head hit the chief below the belt. Then Andy crushed them both to the ground and knelt on them.

"Ye bloodthirsty old murderer!" he gasped, grinding Morgan's face into the grass and earth. "By——, can't ye git enough of it? Ye red-souled old sinner, I've a mind to kill ye right now—an' cheat the gallows!"

Bean and Morgan continued to struggle feebly, flat on the ground, with their faces in the thick grass. Andy turned his head over his shoulder, and in the terrible red glare of the fire his honest young face looked twisted and devilish. Rage and anxiety twisted it.

"Is he dead?" he asked, with a catch in his voice.

"No, no!" cried the girl. "He is breathing. His heart beats."

"Thank God for that!" said Andy reverently. "If his heart wasn't beatin', by the Lord, there's another heart I know of that would stop in about

half a minute! It's you I'm speakin' of, you murderin', red-souled old varmint!"

"Don't do no more killin' nor you can help," remarked Noel Sacobie. "Killin's bad medicine, you bet." The old Maliseet appeared from the flaring, wavering lights and shadows and stood near Archie and the girl. "Morgan bin playin' the fool again?" he queried.

"He stepped out jist now an' cracked the boss over the head," Andy informed him in a voice like a dog's snarl.

"An' who else you got there?" asked the Maliseet.

"Bean, the whisky peddler—one of the fellers who tried to shoot us in the canoe. We caught him jist now, tryin' to make a gitaway in yer canoe. This place seems to be a nest of murderers."

"You bet," said Noel Sacobie. "What the chief hit Archie for?"

"Jist for fun, I guess. Way he has with his friends."

"Turn him over. Lemme see him."

Andy turned Morgan over onto his back, still holding him hard.

"What you hit Archie MacElroy for this time?" asked Noel, squatting beside Morgan's head and staring down at him. "You git too darn gay, Morgan. Yes, you bet. You git yerself hung some day. Make me sick!"

Morgan choked and spluttered. He squirmed and gasped for breath.

"He—lit—the—fire," he gasped. "Revenge—for the accident—this morning."

"Morgan," replied Noel Sacobie, wagging his head, "you gittin' old. You one big fool. Noel Sacobie stand for you long time—but now he git a'mighty sick. MacElroy, he not near yer house since mornin'. Him an' Flemmin' down river, two mile from here, on t'other shore. Me see 'em go, me watch 'em stay. Two hour ago me an' Jessie go down river an' visit 'em. Ugh! More'n two hour ago—maybe three. Then we all come back—an' pretty soon we see little fire, big as yer hand. Morgan, you one darn ol' fool! You want man who set yer fire? A'right. Look-a here.

What you think Hedley Bean doin' round here? He don't like you—what?"

"He opened his eyes—and shut them again!" cried Jessie. "Get him some brandy, somebody. And he must be carried to some sort of shelter."

"Let me sit up," growled the chief. "I've a flask in my pocket."

"Ye lay right there," answered Flemming. "I'll git the flask from yer pocket for ye. Which pocket? A flask with a trigger, I reckon."

"I'm not armed," said the chief in a stifled voice. "Breast-pocket."

Andy found the flask and handed it to Noel Sacobie. Sacobie stepped over to where Archie still lay unconscious, knelt, and poured a little of the brandy between the slightly parted lips. But Archie's teeth were set tight, and most of the spirits trickled over his face.

"Let me have it," said Jessie, and took the flask from Noel's hand. She wet the palm of her hand with the brandy and bathed Archie's brow and temples. She rubbed his wrists with it, then forced a few drops between his teeth. He opened his eyes and stared up at her.

"Who did that?" he asked.

"The chief, dear," answered the girl. "Andy is dealing with him."

Archie sighed.

"Difficult person—to make friends with," he said.

Sacobie grunted his satisfaction and returned to Andy and his charges. He jerked Hedley Bean out of Andy's grasp and stood him on his feet. There was no power of physical resistance left in the peddler.

"Set fire to the house, hey?" cried the Maliseet, shaking the other violently. "An' try to shoot Archie MacElroy, hey?"

"Let me up," said Morgan to Andy. "I see that I made a mistake. I want to have a look at Bean. I'll not hurt anybody—or run away."

Andy let the old man get to his feet. Morgan arose slowly from the grass, breathing short and sharp. He staggered a little, then stepped close to Bean and glared at him with wide eyes reddened by the glare of his burning house. The peddler cringed under that inspection. The chief did not speak, but turned and walked unsteadily to where

the girl knelt with Archie's head in the hollow of her arm. The girl looked up at him with a quivering face.

"Go away," she said in a low voice. "You are a miserable old beast. I never want to see you again."

Morgan did not move.

"How came it that you and Sacobie went to his camp?" he asked.

"Because I wanted to," she replied. "I ran away to go to him. And I made Noel Sacobie take me in his canoe. And I would have stayed with him, but he said that it was better for me to come back. And he came, too. He isn't afraid of you. He is not a coward—or a sneak."

The old man did not speak. Archie moved his head slightly on the girl's arm and opened his eyes full upon the chief.

"I'll take her away—openly—honestly—in spite of you," he murmured. "I came to try to make friends with you—but now I'm your enemy. I've stood too much from you to-day."

Morgan felt Andy at his elbow, but gave him no heed. He stared at MacElroy, then at Jessie.

"Jessie, I want you to know that I did not mean to pull the trigger this morning," he said thickly. "I was excited, furious—mad, if you like; but I did not mean to fire the revolver. I had no intention of wounding this young man. Think carefully, my girl, and you will remember that I've never told you an untruth."

Jessie had never before heard the old savage make any sort of excuse for any action of his. Neither had Noel Sacobie, who had drawn near to listen, still clutching Hedley Bean.

"That may be," she said; "but why did you strike him now?"

"Because I thought he was the man who had set fire to my house."

"You make plenty mistakes," said Noel Sacobie.

Morgan turned upon the peddler. Again he fixed him with that wide and threatening stare. Again the peddler cringed with sheer terror.

"I had some trouble with you last year, I think," said the chief quietly. "So this is the way you get back at me, is it? Now it's my turn to get back at you. And you tried to shoot MacElroy, hey? I got the credit for that trick. Who was

the Indian with you when you fired at the canoe? Lying won't help you. Speak up."

"There wasn't no Injun," whined Bean. "It was Jim Samson fired at the canoe—an' he's only half baked. I couldn't stop him. I tried."

"Jim Samson's wife told us it was an Indian," said Archie.

"She sure had us fooled that time, I guess," said Andy.

"Come up to the barns," said the chief. "Carry MacElroy, some of you. I'll take charge of Bean. Girl, your poor mother is nearly crazy with anxiety."

Sacobie and Flemming carried Archie, and Jessie walked by his side. She remembered, with a pang of shame, how Archie had been carried up to the house once before. He had not been wounded then, though he had been bound; but it had been worse than now. She had doubted him then—had tried to, at least.

Chief Morgan walked behind, yanking Hedley Bean along with him. They came into full view of the blazing house. One could see at a glance that it was doomed. The people of the house and

reservation had deserted it and were giving all their attention to the barns and stables and the tall timber beyond. The roof of the house fell in with a cloud of sparks and a spurt of flame. Fortunately there was no wind. They moved to the left. Morgan paused for a second, pointed to the roaring ruins with his left hand, and shook the limp peddler as a dog shakes a rat.

One of the hay-barns was roughly fitted up for the household. Most of the household gear and provisions had been saved. Archie was put to bed on a mattress, between clean sheets that smelled of smoke. Andy had to undress him, for the poor fellow was helpless. The rap on the head, added to the increasing pain of the wounded shoulder, had been too much for him. He lay in a sort of daze, opening his eyes for a second now and then, mumbling words aimlessly when spoken to, but for the most part lying as if asleep. Jessie bathed his head, which was slightly cut and badly lumped above the ear on the right side. She redressed the shoulder, which she found to be red and swollen.

Morgan came to the bed in the big barn, after having tied Hedley Bean securely in a small calf-

house. Andy Flemming was beside the bed with Jessie, helping her with the bandages. The chief drew near in silence and looked down at the sufferer. He put out his left hand, stooping, and placed a finger on Archie's wrist. Then he touched his forehead lightly.

"He is feverish," he said. "He needs quinine. Young man, the medicine-chest is somewhere about here—a mahogany box about two feet square, bound with brass. Have a look for it. Here's the key. Everything is correctly labeled. You'll find quinine tablets in a bottle. And he'd be better for some ice on his head—on the lump. Tell one of the men to get some ice."

Andy stared at the old man for a moment, then went away without a word and commenced hunting about in a pile of articles from the house for the medicine-chest. Jessie looked up wonderingly, doubtfully, at the head of her family. He did not let his eyes meet hers, but lifted the lantern from the floor where Andy had set it and gazed at the face of the unconscious man.

"He told me that his father indorsed that check," said the girl. "He knew nothing of it until he got

home—after that time you tried to imprison him. He told me that his father is—not honorable.”

“He told the truth,” replied the chief. And then: “Why did you go to him?”

“Where else was I to go, after escaping from my room?”

“Were you afraid of me, girl? Did you think I was so mad as to hurt you in any way?”

“No, I wasn’t afraid of you—for long. I went to Archie because I love him. I would have gone away with him to-night if he had not asked me to come back here with him, so that he might tell you all about it—straight to your face. He is not afraid of you.”

“And how does he feel about it? Is he in love with you?”

“Didn’t you know that? He has been—ever since that first day.”

“He is stubborn,” said the chief reflectively. “And he is conceited. He takes too high a hand—with his betters. You see how sure he was that I had sent this rogue Bean to ambush him. And he was far too ready to call me a liar in the matter of that check. I see now that we were both

wrong. But I don't like him. He has bad blood in him. But I admit, again, that I regret the accident with the revolver."

"Do you remember how you thanked him for saving my life?" returned the girl. "You ordered him off the place—and then insulted him. And yet you speak as if he had misjudged you. You have been savage and mean and violent with him. You have misjudged every action of his. You have set your men on him and tied him with ropes; you have shot and clubbed him. And yet, after all that, for my sake he was willing to come and tell you to your face that he—loved me."

"I admit that I've been hasty—but I don't trust him. I don't like him. He is his father's son. And when you recall such a black record against me, young lady, kindly remember that you brought a man with a revolver into my house and helped him bind and gag me and tie me to my own sofa. And remember the names you called me to-day. And be kind enough to remember that I've never held that sofa incident against you for a minute—and that you are still my heiress."

"It is only for mother's sake that I care about being your heiress," replied the girl.

Just then Andy returned with the quinine and a lump of ice, and at the same moment Archie opened his eyes and stared up steadily at the chief. His lips moved and he mumbled something they failed to catch. The chief handed him a cup of water. Archie put up his left hand for it, but Jessie took it and held it to his hot lips. He drank a little.

"I'm willing—to forget—your treatment of me," he said faintly but clearly. "As for your money—she doesn't want it. I'm able to support her—yes, and her mother—in spite of my father's tricks."

"Quiet, dear," soothed Jessie. "Here is quinine for you."

"Two of those tablets," said Morgan.

Archie swallowed the quinine and dozed off.

"Did that sound like his father?" asked the girl.

"I freely admit that it did not," replied the chief.

CHAPTER XIX

DEPARTURE OF HEDLEY BEAN

Andy Flemming watched beside his friend and employer throughout the night. Archie was restless until dawn, then seemed to sleep quietly for several hours. He showed few signs of fever when he awoke at seven o'clock to find Jessie beside him. She stooped and kissed him on the lips, and tears welled into her eyes.

"I'll be right as rain in a few days," he said.

"Oh, I hope so!" she replied. "But your arm will not be well for a long time, the chief says. And you are to have nothing but milk for your breakfast. Boy, I thought last night that he had killed you—and I tried to kill him. It was frightful."

She knelt beside the low bed and lifted his left hand to her face between both of hers. For a little while they whispered together. After a few

minutes she stood up again, her eyes and cheeks very bright.

"How is the chief?" he asked. "Did the house burn to the ground?"

"Yes, it burned to the ground," she answered. "And the chief is wonderfully subdued. He has not lost his temper since he struck you—even with that old peddler. I think he is ashamed of himself."

"And what about the peddler?"

"He is shut up in one of the calf-houses. He is in a funk; but he refuses to admit that he set the fire. But he is terribly afraid of the chief, though he has not been treated badly—so far."

Archie drank his milk. Then Jessie went to the place where Bean was imprisoned. He was strongly tied hand and foot.

"I know that you set the fire," she said. "If you will admit it to the chief to-day I will let you escape to-night. I will have a canoe and provisions all ready for you."

"I dassent do it," said Bean. "He'd kill me."

"No, he wouldn't," she assured him. "He will have you sent down river to jail, and will accuse

you of trying to shoot Archie MacElroy as well as setting fire to this house. He means to do this whether you confess or not. So you had better confess and get away."

"I'll do it," said the old peddler.

Jessie left him. Bean sat deep in thought. And here it must be explained how he came to be sneaking about the reservation, and trying to escape in Noel Sacobie's canoe, so long after the setting of the fire. He and Flint had kept to their hiding-place in the bush-screened mouth of the little creek above the reservation all night and all day. Bean continued determined on his course of revenge against Morgan; but Flint, sick and sore, had lost all desire to damage Morgan in return for the smash on the head. He was a sick man, was Flint; but he had sense enough to say nothing of his slackening of purpose and courage to the peddler. Being well above the reservation, they had seen nothing of the activities of MacElroy and Flemming on the river. They had heard the report of the chief's revolver early in the morning, but that had meant nothing to them.

Bean treated the inspector like an honored

patient all day, preparing him for his share of the night's work. Their plans were matured, by evening, to the last detail. Flint was to fire the timber back of the farmstead in several places, then hasten back to the boat in the mouth of the creek, where he would find the peddler awaiting him—that worthy having already set fire to the house and barns. Darkness came at last. The peddler struck a match and looked at his watch. It was fifteen minutes to nine o'clock. He repeated to Flint, for the third time, that he would fire the house at exactly fifteen minutes after nine. That would give the inspector plenty of time to get the woods going nicely. So they slipped from their retreat.

Bean moved noiselessly to the right, and Flint took a slant to the left. Bean was within a hundred yards of the house, in good cover, when the outcry broke upon the night—Morgan's bellowing caused by the discovery of Jessie's escape. Even Flint heard it. Bean lay low and gave ear for a few minutes. He heard other voices join the chief's and the whole tumult move down at last toward the river. Then he continued about his business, wondering a little, but undaunted. But the in-

spector had no courage, and his heart was no longer in the game. He turned at the first sound of the old chief's outcry, and made good time back to the boat among the alders. He tossed the food and blankets aboard, pulled out of the creek and into the middle of the river. Weak and sick as he was, with his head spinning like a top, he pulled a strong oar for the next half-hour.

Hedley Bean found the big house deserted and wide open. He entered it by the front door, found a lamp, and poured oil on the curtains of two of the rooms on the ground floor. He found two more lamps, and smashed them upon the floor, one in each of the two rooms already treated. Then he struck a match in each room and ran through the empty house and out by the kitchen door. The barking of dogs and the sound of voices frightened him from the barns. He ran for the woods, and made his way back toward the creek and the boat; and as he advanced, with a hand before his face to save his eyes from the springing branches, he grinned at a thought that squirmed from the back of his crafty and evil mind to the front of it. And this thought was that, now he had used Mr. Flint,

it was time to get rid of him. He hated Flint—and could make no more use of him. Very well. He would go away in the boat alone, with the food and blankets, and leave Flint to be dealt with by the chief. This was a bright idea, and just the kind in which Bean's twisted brain and wrinkled soul took delight.

He reached the hiding-place. He felt about fruitlessly for the blankets and provisions. Then, with a sickening flutter of fear in the pit of his stomach, he lit a match. Blankets and provisions were gone. The match dropped from his fingers and went out. He groped his way down among the twisted alders and felt about for the boat. He could not find it. He lit another match, and by its tiny illumination he saw the mark of the boat's keel in the muddy slime among the black roots of the alders. Then he understood. Flint had outwitted him. Flint had dealt him the identical treacherous blow which he had intended to deal Flint. Now he, not Flint, was left on the scene of action and in the power of the savage Morgan. Rage, hatred, and fear fell upon him like a storm. Evil possessed him, like the devils of old. He flung

himself down among the coarse grass and slimy roots, and cursed in a voice that was not human, and beat the senseless mud and vegetation with his fists. At last he sat up, stifled his rage, and tried to think of a way out of the difficulty. He moved down-stream toward the reservation.

For a long time he lay hidden, giving ear to the excitement caused by the fire. The bellows of the chief chilled him to the marrow. The one person in the world of whom he was afraid was Morgan. The chief had terrified him once with the white flame of his eyes. The peddler crawled along the river-front of the reservation, which was now deserted. He was so shaken by his misfortune and his fear of the chief that he derived but little satisfaction from the red flare of the burning house. He sought a canoe along the bank; but all the canoes had been carried far up from the edge of the water. He gave fully half an hour to the search for a canoe lying within reasonable distance of the river. The search was fruitless, and he had just made up his mind to run the risk of carrying one of the canoes from the edge of the clearing to the stream when he heard voices on the river.

He took cover among the bushes and waited. The voices drew nearer. A canoe came ashore. Some one ran past him toward the blazing house. He heard more voices, and people running along the shore. They stopped where the canoe had just landed.

Bean waited, crouched among the alders. At last, after what seemed a long hour to the peddler, the people at the edge of the water came toward him and passed him. His ears told him that they had left the canoe at the edge of the river. He had no time to lose, for one of them might turn at any moment and carry the canoe up to the clearing. So he slipped from his retreat and crept down to the canoe. His groping hands found it. It had been turned over; but the paddles were lying beside it. He righted it noiselessly and lifted the bow to push it into the black water. His foot slipped, and one knee struck against the bark—and then Andy Flemming fell upon him. Hedley Bean thought of these things as he sat in the dark shed, tied at wrists and ankles.

Over in the big hay-barn that was now serving the family and its sick guest for a house, Jessie

found her mother sitting in a salvaged rocking-chair beside Archie's bed. The flustered lady was writing a letter to Archie's dictation. Mrs. Morgan looked up at her daughter's approach with a half-fearful, half-protesting air.

"Your uncle asked me to sit for a little while with Mr. MacElroy," she said, "and Mr. MacElroy has asked me to write a letter for him."

Jessie laughed. "Why, mother, you really look as if you expected some one to bite you," she said. "I'll not, I promise you; and that young man is quite harmless."

"Your mother is very kind," said Archie. "I'm writing to March & West, the people I'm working for, to tell them that I've had an accident, and can't go on up to the headwaters for a few days yet. I'll get Andy to take it out to the nearest post-office."

Jessie sat down, and Archie finished the letter. Mrs. Morgan left them then. Archie got possession of the girl's hand.

"I've been worrying this morning," he said. "I've been wondering what my father is doing."

Queer, but I feel it in my bones that he will get me into trouble again."

He told her of his father's senseless quarrel with Mr. March, of March & West, and how nearly it had come to losing him his employment.

"The matter of the forgery can be kept quiet," he explained; "and, though it was a cruel shock to me, I was not greatly surprised. I knew he was capable of it—at least, I should have known. And the actual loss in money was no more than the amount of the check. But, by his unprovoked, senseless but calculated insults to men like March, he can put me back five years—he can undo all my work. And why? Lord, I wish I could understand him! He is utterly selfish—and yet he takes pleasure in making trouble between me and the men I work for. He'll be after March again, I know, if for no other reason than to punish me for discovering his forged indorsement of that confounded check. And here I am, helpless on my back. It is hard, Jessie—now, especially—now that I have something to work ahead for. Can't he see that he's cutting off his nose to spite—my face?"

He smiled grimly at that and ceased to speak; and just then the chief appeared, soft-footed, from somewhere behind the bed. He looked intently at Archie for several seconds, then touched his forehead with the tips of his fingers.

"He's warming up again," he said. "You'd better take his temperature, Jessie."

Archie did not look at Morgan, but took the little clinical thermometer submissively between his lips. His temperature was up again. Morgan drew the girl aside.

"I'm going to send a couple of men out for a doctor," he whispered. "The shoulder is what I'm afraid of. Don't mention it to him. And I'll send his letter out at the same time. Andrew Flemming refuses to go. He seems to think that I intend to do young MacElroy some harm."

"Which is scarcely to be wondered at, considering what harm you've already done him," replied the girl.

"Nonsense!" retorted the chief. "A slight accident—nothing more. Don't you see that I am doing my best for him now? But we won't argue. I'm willing to admit that I treated the young man

a trifle too harshly. By the way, that rascal Bean has confessed to setting the fire. I saw him again about five minutes ago. I'll land him in jail."

"And when are you going to beg Archie's pardon for what you have done?" asked the girl.

Morgan shuffled his feet uneasily and gazed vacantly over her head.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Beg his pardon? Absurd! He was in the wrong about that check. It was not my business to know that his father was a forger—the dashing Captain Ian MacElroy. And when I shot him in the shoulder it was nothing but an accident; and when I tapped him on the head, I was quite sure that he had set fire to my house. I know now that he did not set fire to the house; but I'll not beg his pardon. I'd never lower myself to beg the pardon of any MacElroy. Now, get me his letter."

"Why do you hate his father so?" asked the girl.

"I have my reason," replied the old man, "and it is a good one."

She handed him Archie's letter to March & West.

in an envelope, unsealed. He looked at her with a grim smile and sealed the letter.

"Your mother has already told me what he dictated," he said. "He made no mention of the wound in his shoulder, but spoke of the ambush on the main river and the loss of the canoe."

The girl went back to the bed and Morgan left the barn. Jessie told Archie that the peddler had confessed to firing the house, and that the chief intended to "have the law on him."

"Then I was wrong about the ambush," he said. "I see now that the chief had nothing whatever to do with it."

"Yes," she replied. "And the chief is sending your letter out by two of his own men. Andy refuses to leave you."

The men who departed for the nearest doctor and the nearest post-office, an hour later, carried two letters. One was from Archie, for March & West; the other was from the chief, and was addressed to Captain Ian MacElroy, V. C.

Jessie left Archie's bedside for several hours that afternoon. At ten o'clock at night she slipped away

again. Early in the morning the chief broke into the barn with a bellow of rage.

"Some one has let Bean get away!" he roared. "He's gone with a canoe and an outfit. Where's that Flemming fellow?"

Jessie faced him. "Andy Flemming had nothing to do with it, and Archie MacElroy knows nothing about it," she said. "I did it—and I got Noel Sacobie to help me. I did it partly for your sake. Don't you see that if he were arrested and prosecuted for the fire and the ambush, the fact that you had fired a revolver at Archie would come out? Yes, and that you had hit Archie on the head. The whole disgraceful business would get out."

CHAPTER XX

THE CHIEF MAKES A DISCLOSURE

Morgan stared at the girl for a second or two, dumbfounded; then turned on his heel and made for the open door of the barn. His gaunt frame shook with the tumult of his suppressed emotions. His temper fairly throbbed within him, so savagely that it seemed to hurt him—to grip his heart and throat. All his life he had been accustomed to let this tyrant temper flow forth when it pleased as the easiest way to deal with it; but now he kept it down—held it behind his eyes and his lips and his twitching muscles. It was hard work, and it hurt; but the old man was trying to turn over a new leaf. Jessie had taught him some painful truths of late. Archie had added to his education. Now, while his own old devil raged within him, crying to be let out by ways of lips, eyes, and hands, his brain told him that the girl had been right in letting the peddler escape.

At the door of the barn he came face to face with old Noel Sacobie—Sacobie, whom he had fed and befriended—Sacobie, the true chief of the reservation—Noel Sacobie, his servant, his companion, his friend of many years, in many adventures in the woods and on the rivers. He grasped the Maliseet by the arm and led him away from the barn in a pulsing silence. At last, at the edge of the wood, he halted and let the devil of his temper have its way. He reviled that calm and aged Maliseet. He glared at him with that terrible white glare. He snarled, he sneered, he cursed, he shook his fists in that smoky face. At last the devil was spent, and the two old men stood silent, eye to eye, the one breathless and flushed, the other calm and cool.

"You one good feller," said Noel Sacobie at last; "but you one darn ol' fool, Archie Morgan. Yes, you bet. That a'right. You always good friend to Noel Sacobie—an' Noel a'mighty good friend to you. Feel better now, maybe? Good."

Noel Sacobie turned and walked away. The chief stood where he had been left for several minutes, blinking at the landscape with his fierce old

eyes. At last he sighed, smiled wanly, and started slowly back toward the cluster of barns and stables.

During the next two days the chief was very quiet and moody, and Archie MacElroy was very ill. Jessie was frightened, though she faced the situation bravely. She and Flemming nursed the invalid, with a little help from Mrs. Morgan. Archie's shoulder pained him a great deal, and when it was not paining him he lay in a heavy drowse. He was slightly delirious at night. In the mornings he felt better for an hour or two, talked a little to Jessie, fretted at his idleness and the uncertainty of his position, and worried about his father and the future. He knew that this was no time for the final encounter with the chief. Flat on his back, he was in no position to demand a statement of the old man's attitude toward his love for Jessie. It was hard luck. The greatest question of his life was demanding an answer, and he was forced to turn a deaf ear. True, the girl had answered her part of it, and that was the greater part; but with his future uncertain, the attitude of the chief unknown, and his illness holding him back from forcing the chief to a statement and

from taking the girl away, he felt himself and his happiness to be in a dangerous condition.

On the night of the second day Doctor Wilkins arrived. By Morgan's orders, only one of the men had returned with the doctor, leaving the other to wait at the village, which boasted a post-office, for any mail that might arrive in the course of the next five days. Should any letters come for Archie before the end of the five days the man was to bring them in immediately. These were the chief's orders. The doctor looked cheerful over MacElroy's arm. It was evidently worthy of his undivided attention. He fairly beamed, drew Morgan aside, and whispered: "If I save that arm I'll be doing a fine piece of work."

The chief glared. "Man, and if you don't save it, there's trouble ahead for you," he replied in shaking but guarded tones.

"Tut, tut," returned the doctor. "I'm an honest man and can do no more than my best—and I've never been known to do less. Talk of that sort will neither help nor harm any patient, my good sir. Tell me the nature of the wounds—and the circumstances."

"A dog bit him—and I shot him," said the chief, at the same time leading the doctor farther away from the bed.

The M.D. stared at him in blank astonishment. He had heard queer things of the old chief, but this statement was a trifle too queer.

"You shot him? What for, in the name of all that's sane?"

"An accident, my friend. We were looking at a revolver. If you have the idea in your fool head that it was done intentionally, I need only inform you that MacElroy is a relative of mine. His father and I are cousins. Our mothers were Skiffingtons."

"That may account for it," said the doctor, grave of face but with a twinkle in his eye. "Skiffingtons. Well, never mind. All in the family. The young man has been overtaxing his strength since being wounded. Bad lump on his head, too. That hasn't done him any good. More Skiffington, I suppose. Well, sir, you did not call me in an hour too soon. I'll do my best."

Doctor Wilkins was as good as his word. He did his best. Though he had been out of McGill

twenty years and in the woods ten, he had not forgotten anything that he had learned at college. And a man cannot practice medicine for ten years in the back of beyond without learning a great many things that were never thought of at college. Wilkins was tough as a well-seasoned paddle—tough and springy. He might bend to his work, but he always sprang straight again after every bout. His horse and pung had gone through the rotten ice of the river one night in April. He had saved his own life, that of the horse, and his instrument-bag—Heaven only knows how—and had brought another life safely into the world and saved that of the mother within half an hour of his escape from the icy water. And now he did his best for Archie MacElroy; but Archie was in a bad way. For a few days it looked as if the doctor would not only have difficulty in saving the arm, but in saving anything. The doctor slept only during his meals.

Jessie, being unseasoned and frightened, did not sleep at all. Andy Flemming may have shut his eyes now and then; but, if so, nobody ever caught him at it. The chief moved about the big barn

like an uneasy spirit on his moccasined feet. Once, in the gray watch of early dawn, he appeared beside the bed, looked at the unconscious man, and laid a hand on the girl's bowed head.

"It's all right," he whispered. "He doesn't look like his father."

Jessie lifted her face and glanced up at him in dull wonder.

"He looks like his mother," continued the old man. Then he turned and went soft-footed away and out of the barn into the gray dawn. It was while things were this way with Archie that the man who had been left at the post-office returned with a letter. The letter was for Archie, and the envelope bore the address of March & West in an upper corner. It was given to the chief. The old man slipped it into his pocket and entered the barn where the fight for life and limb was going silently on. He saw the doctor—calm, alert, and unwearied. He saw the girl—white-faced, straight-lipped, with the shadow of fear in her eyes, fighting shoulder to shoulder with that man of steel. And in the background he saw Andy Flemming sitting bolt upright in a chair, gray of face, un-

shaven, awake, and waiting with set jaws. The chief moved away and took the letter from his pocket.

"Business," he said. "Some one must attend to it. I'll do it."

So he tore open the envelope and read the enclosed letter with ever-contracting brows and ever-hardening eyes. The letter was from West. It informed Archie that Mr. March demanded his immediate dismissal. It seems that the captain had run foul of Mr. March again, this time in the street, with outrageous insults. Mr. West was more sorry than he could say, and would use all his influence to find other employers for Archie. The chief's eye flashed with that formidable white flame that had so terrified Bean, the peddler. He lifted a big, lean fist and shook it high above his gray head.

"By——! he wants to ruin his own son, does he?" he cried. "He ruined my life; and now—him! He wants to ruin his son's life—*her* son's life! I'll see him in hell first! He defies me, does he? Then I'll teach him. I'll let him see that I meant what I wrote. I'll teach them all that old Archie Morgan isn't to be fooled with. This fel-

low March—whoever *he* is—I'll teach him that he can't cross Archie Morgan. And this long-winded ass West. What's he butting in for? West? Who is West? Confound him!"

His hand dropped suddenly to his side, his lower jaw relaxed, and the white flame faded from his eyes.

"If he—pulls through," he added slowly. "If he pulls through, I'll let that old rogue—and those tuppenny merchants—see what a Morgan can do when he sets himself to it."

He returned the letter to his pocket and walked down toward the river. He paced the lip of hard mud and coarse grass between the slipping black water and the tangled willows and alders, his long hands clasped behind his back, the fingers working over and over one another, as if feeling for something to throttle. He did not often excuse his behavior, even to himself; but now he was hard at it.

"The cur!" he muttered. "The dastardly swine! All this misfortune can be traced to him. Oh, God! is he to be allowed to destroy the happiness of my girl? His doings—his doings as surely as if he

had fired the revolver and held the stick! What was I? Nothing. A tool of his, because of the hate in my heart for him. That is it. My hands are clean of this thing. Accidents. Accidents. Ian MacElroy, you are pushing me beyond endurance. My temper will not stand much more. But for you, I'd never have touched the boy—never have harmed him. This is all your fault—all your fault—you! as every misfortune in my life has been your fault. Kill your own son, will you? Put out the light for my girl, will you?"

He paced the shore more furiously than ever. Suddenly he halted and lifted both arms high above his head. He looked like a prophet of old—or a madman.

"Dear God," he cried, "if you pull that boy through I will—I will rip this hate for Ian MacElroy out of my heart! I mean it. I will cleanse my heart of that old poison. I'll—forgive him!"

It was that same night the doctor found the chief.

"He'll pull through," said the doctor. "I'm going to bed for an hour or two. Miss Morgan and

Flemming will watch him—the two best assistants I ever had on a case.”

The chief gripped the smaller man by the shoulders with both hands.

“And the arm?” he asked.

“The arm. That’s a small matter, in this case—but we’ll save it, my friend,” said the doctor. “Skill and love and friendship—they are hard to beat.”

“Yes—with God’s help,” replied the old man.

Two days later Archie was allowed to talk a little and to listen to talk. He was out of danger and regaining health every hour. The doctor was arranging to go away on the morrow. Andy and the girl were sleeping like logs, the girl’s closed lids wet with tears of joy. The chief sat beside Archie’s bed.

“Young man,” said the chief, “you don’t understand me, and I want you to understand me. I have a hasty temper; but perhaps you’ve noticed that. That’s neither here nor there. When you were at your worst I gave my word to God Almighty that if you were saved I’d wipe the hatred for your father out of my heart. And I’ve done it. God heard me. I forgive your father the

harm he did me—and if he entered this barn now, an outcast, I would give him food and drink—and a home.”

Archie turned his head on the pillow and gazed at the chief in wonder. His face was very thin. His eyes seemed very large.

“Why did you hate my father so?” he asked weakly. “What was the injury he did you?”

“Your father and I are cousins,” replied the chief. “He has no Morgan blood in him—our mothers were sisters. Your mother was a Scarnell. I knew her before she ever saw your father—and I loved her. And she loved me—and we were soon to be married. Then your father came along, with his uniforms, his eyes, his tenor voice, his Victoria cross, his blasted romance—but there!—he’s forgiven. It was torture for me—and afterward it became torture for your mother. She did not forget me. She sometimes wrote to me. She saw her mistake. Your father—my cousin—thought it a good joke—this breaking of hearts. But he is forgiven. You are my godson. Well, that’s the story. Have you never heard anything of it?”

“So you are the man,” replied Archie unsteadily.

"I have heard of it—but never your name. My father had many cousins. My mother told me about it—when I was very little. And she used to cry when she told it. But she was brave. She tried to—live up to her mistake."

"You think she did not forget me, lad?"

"She—never loved my father. I could see it, young as I was. And he did not care. It amused him. He thought only of himself."

"He is forgiven," said the chief in a cracked voice. "The poor fool—I do not hate him any more. I pity him. He took her from me—but not her heart. And I am your godfather—though by proxy. Ian MacElroy is forgiven. He has nothing to fear from me—and you have nothing to fear from him, lad. Go to sleep now. We've talked enough. I'll sit here and smoke for a while. Go to sleep—and don't worry."

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAPTAIN GOES FISHING

When Archie MacElroy was at the most critical stage of his illness, up there in the big, empty barn on the Blue Bend, down in the little city on the lower waters of the St. John, Captain Ian MacElroy decided to go fishing. It was fine weather, and the captain had been a keen sportsman in his day. He wanted to get out of town for other reasons. His senseless quarrel with March had made his position decidedly awkward. The commanding officer at the military depot had politely requested the old hero to refrain from making further use of the ante-room of the mess. That was a shrewd blow; and though he informed the commanding officer that his (the C. O.'s) father had been a counter-jumper, he got small satisfaction from the retort.

He saw that his game was about played out in the little city. He had received a letter from Arch-

ibald Morgan warning him against making any more trouble for Archie, and threatening him with picturesque punishment should he refuse to accept the caution. This letter had inspired him to insult Mr. March the second time. But now the captain saw that he had made a mistake—several mistakes, in fact. He had spoiled his comfort in the little town, put an end to his pleasant and profitable little games of bridge in the ante-room of the little mess every evening, and perhaps he had pressed Archie's good nature a trifle too far in the matter of the forgery. Archie was a milk-sop, and of course could not understand the rights of a father and a gentleman.

He was absolutely dependent on his son now. His people in England had turned a deaf ear to him long ago. He would go up-river, and up the Blue Bend, throw himself gracefully on his son's mercy (with a few well-placed tears and a little mention of old days and the Victoria cross), and enjoy some fishing at the same time. Also, he would amuse himself by looking up his cousin, Archie Morgan. He had neglected Morgan for years, for a lifetime, ever since his elopement with the

beautiful girl whom Morgan had intended to marry. But now that his eccentric cousin was showing signs of interest in Archie, perhaps the time had arrived to get a little financial help from him.

So the captain set out, accompanied by Denis. They went as far as they could by rail, then hired a canoe and took to the river. They were told that there was no very bad water between that point and their destination. So the captain did not hire a guide. He had learned to paddle a canoe when he first came to Canada, and Denis was a useful man. They would make the Blue Bend all right, the captain assured his companion, and have a very good time by the way. They set off bravely up the big river, beyond the end of the railroad. Their progress was slow, for neither of them could handle a pole, and the water was a trifle too swift for easy paddling. But they crawled along, taking their time. The captain did not believe in fretting or sweating. Fishing now and then, paddling not too hard, eating, drinking, and smoking of the best, and sleeping soundly at night, they made their way pleasantly upward into the wilderness.

At last they neared the mouth of the Blue Bend, and went into camp on the big river, about fifteen miles below the tributary stream. Denis put up the little tent and cooked the dainty evening meal of trout fried with bacon, potatoes and tinned asparagus, a fruit-jelly and sweet biscuits, cocktails to start on, and coffee and liqueurs to wind up on. Then they sat by the fire and smoked their cigars. While the captain and his old servant ate and drank and smoked, they were spied upon from the thicket by a man with red-brown eyes like the eyes of an animal. The watcher in the thicket was no other than old Hedley Bean, the peddler who had been helped to escape from the chief's clutches.

It seems that Noel Sacobie, who had reasons of his own for hating the peddler, had played a terrible trick on him without Jessie's knowledge. He had supplied Bean with an outfit of rubbish and a canoe that had opened at every seam before it had been an hour in the water. The peddler had been nearly caught that time. He had reached the shore breathless, and had pulled himself out of the black water with his last ounce of strength. Since then the peddler had been working his way slowly down

the Blue Bend and the big river. He was afraid to go back. He had lived on wild straw-berries, a few trout which he had managed to hook with a bent pin, and a few hares which he had snared. Now the peddler lay in the thicket and watched two other old men eat and drink and smoke. They were strangers to him; but he was mightily interested in them. At last they retired to the tent and the fire dwindled, faded, fell to a little heap of red coals. An hour passed.

Hedley Bean issued from the thicket. He was noiseless as a cat. He went first to the upturned canoe and lifted it across the few yards that separated it from the water. He slid it a few feet into the stream with infinite caution, without a sound. Then he stowed the boxes and bags of provisions aboard, sliding the canoe further into the water as he loaded it.

Last of all, he got the paddles from where they leaned against the white slope of the little tent. He stood there for a moment, listening to the regular breathing of the two old men inside. Then he glided down to the canoe. A paddle dipped, sounding a faint, liquid, peaceful note. The canoe

slipped into the vague shimmer of starshine and shadow. A fish jumped in midstream and returned to the river with a silvery splash. So Hedley Bean fooled that wise old Maliseet, Noel Sacobie.

The weather changed during the night. A wind blew across the woods and hills and valleys from the east. The starshine faded out and an inky blackness filled the world. Rain began to fall shortly after midnight. The wind was moderate. There was neither thunder nor lightning. But the rain fell in sheets, humming and booming upon the sloping roof of the tent with a note of drums. The captain and Denis moved uneasily in their sleep for a moment, then lay quiet again. All night the rain fell upon the vast wilderness and hammered its long drum-roll upon the white tent. It beat the sliding surface of the river to a smoke of spray. Early in the morning the old men awoke. The rain had ceased, but the sky was low and gray. The air was close and breathless. Denis crawled from his blankets and out of the tent onto the sodden moss. He uttered a cry of dismay.

"What's the trouble?" asked the captain, sitting up.

"The canoe is gone, sir—and all the grub," replied the man.

They saw that there was nothing else to do but to continue their journey on foot toward the reservation on the Blue Bend. They knew of no other human habitation so near, and the settlement on the Blue Bend could be found by simply following the shore until the mouth of the smaller river was reached, and then following up that. They had nothing to eat; but they drank a little brandy from the captain's flask. They took their dry blankets along with them, leaving the tent standing. They scrambled over crisscrossed "blowdowns," through tangled thickets, across mossy pits, hip deep in green slime.

The clouds suddenly opened again before they had gone half a mile. The captain cursed the whim that had brought him to this place, and the appalling stroke of misfortune that had lost him the canoe and provisions. He had formulated no theory concerning the loss. He simply cursed the unknown man or men who had committed the theft. He damned the country that permitted such lawlessness. He was not afraid, but he was

wofully uncomfortable. Physical discomfort was a thing he hated more keenly than danger. For another half-hour they struggled onward beneath the downpour, through the water-loaded thickets, across the ridges of crisscrossed blowdowns, through the narrow swamps into which the water had backed from the flooded river in the spring and lain stagnant all these months.

They halted on a rise of ground in the shelter of a clump of big pines, tried to rest, tried to light a fire. Denis could not find any wood or bark dry enough to burn. They could not rest, and so struggled onward again, wet to the skin, their clothing heavy with water—water oozing from their boots at every step. And, mind you, their stomachs were empty. Captain Ian MacElroy had missed a meal for the first time in thirty years. Again the rain ceased. The sun appeared—a vague blotch behind the close, heavy gray of the shapeless clouds. The air was like hot steam. Mosquitoes and black flies appeared from nowhere in particular and fell upon the weary travelers.

Again the captain called a halt; and this time they managed to light a poor sort of fire. Though

there was no heat in the fire to dry their clothing, the bitter smoke of it drove the stinging flies away. To escape from the flies the men squatted with their heads in the smoke until their eyes grew red and swollen.

The close, breathless heat continued, but the gray sky suddenly became blackly overcast. A blue-white flame leaped across the sky, marking out every tree-top like a thing cut in iron to the startled eye. Dark returned like a black lid. Then a crackling roar of thunder, like the irregular firing of a dozen batteries of field-guns in a great steel shed, shocked the brain and deafened the ears. Next, as if the shrapnel from the guns had struck the earth with their withering blast, a titanic wind smote the wilderness, beating the saplings to earth, bending the tall spruces and pines like whips, wrenching great branches apart and away, hurling old trees crashing to the ground.

The captain and his servant lay flat on the moss, face down, under the long, terrific, maniacal stroke of the wind. They closed their eyes. They saw nothing; but they felt the wind like a living weight on their bodies and sprawled limbs, thrusting them

down against the wet moss. They did not see the river; but the river was a thing to see, to remember in one's dreams, and to flee from. The wind struck it suddenly with full force. No waves arose, for the same terrific onslaught that tore it held it down. Tortured as the water was it could not toss in waves beneath that fierce pressure. Quick as a flash of the mind it whitened like snow. It whitened from bank to bank. Then the hissing sheet of white arose, inch by inch, until it was a hissing bed of spray six feet deep, and the upper layer of this drift of shredded spray was flung away before the wind like a hail of fine shot.

Suddenly the wind passed on and the deluge of rain came again. The trees that had not been broken or uprooted swung and thrashed like wounded, affrighted things. The spray vanished from the river and the black current broke into millions of clattering waves. Terrific as the force of the storm had been, the destructive path of the wind had been quite narrow. It had crossed the river in a fifteen-mile-wide path, going over the captain and his companion with its upper edge. It had not touched the Blue Bend country.

Two days later a salmon-fisher from the reservation found Captain MacElroy and Whalen lying close to the water on the right bank of the Blue Bend. Hunger, fatigue and the poison of the insects had reduced them to the verge of unconsciousness. Their faces and hands were swollen and smeared with their own blood. Their boots were torn and their clothing in shreds. The captain was choked with a heavy cold, and suffered dully from pains in his chest and back. The Maliseet lifted the two wrecks into his canoe and turned the bow up stream.

The chief smoked his pipe and stared unseeingly in front of him, sitting in an armchair near Archie's bed. Archie drifted into a light sleep. Andy Flemming appeared, moving on tip-toe, and the chief gave up the chair to the guide and left the barn.

"I forgive Ian MacElroy," he muttered. "That poison is out of my blood—out of my soul."

He heard his name called in Maliseet. Raising his head he saw a number of the tribesmen approaching, bearing two rough stretchers. He hur-

ried forward to meet them, puzzled and anxious. He halted beside the leading stretcher and looked down into the face of his old enemy—of the despoiler of his happiness—of the man whom he had forgiven at last. And he knew it at the first glance, though it was more than twenty years since he had last seen it—knew it in spite of the disfigurations of time and hard living—in spite of smeared blood, unshaven cheeks, the pallor and shadows of fatigue and starvation. Ian MacElroy was unconscious. The chief questioned the Maliseets. The man who had found the two answered his questions.

“Bring them along,” said the chief. “The doctor will see to them.”

Again Doctor Wilkins was called upon to do his best. He saved Denis Whalen, but the captain died shortly after midnight, very easily, without having regained consciousness. Whallen told of their adventures to the chief, and the chief took the whole story to Archie first thing in the morning. Archie listened in silence, holding Jessie’s hand.

“Perhaps it was my fault that he attempted the journey,” said the chief after he had told all that

he knew of the circumstances of the captain's death. "I wrote a letter to him, sending it out when your letter went to your employers. I warned him not to make any more trouble for you. He defied my warning, and perhaps came up here to defy me again to my face."

"It was not a disgraceful death, at any rate," said Archie quietly. "I thank God for that."

"His man tells me that he—your father—put up a brave fight and forced the last of the brandy in his flask upon him—upon the servant," said the chief.

Archie nodded and Jessie's eyes brightened.

"Here is a letter that came for you some days ago," continued the old man. "You were too ill to be bothered with it at the time, so I took the liberty of reading it—and answering it. Here it is—and here is a copy of my reply."

Archie read the letter from Mr. West with a sinking heart. It was what he had feared. The captain had pulled the result of years of hard work in ruin about his head by this last cruel and meaningless act. But he set his teeth hard and read the

chief's reply to the letter from West. His eyes widened. A splash of color touched his cheeks. His brows contracted. In very curt language Morgan informed Mr. West that Mr. Archibald MacElroy was to occupy the position of manager of Mr. Archibald Morgan's timber lands on the Blue Bend and elsewhere immediately upon his recovery. He also informed him that the timber lands just mentioned extended from the mouth of the Blue Bend to a distance of twelve miles along both sides of the river, and were of an average depth of one mile, making in all some twenty-four square miles of the finest timber in the Province of New Brunswick.

Jessie read the letters over Archie's shoulder. Archie looked in amazement and embarrassment at the chief.

"If this is an offer," said Archie, slowly, "I'm afraid, sir, that I must refuse it. I—I appreciate your generosity, sir—but——"

"But what?" demanded the chief. "Are you not my godson—and a relative? If it's your absurd pride that makes you refuse it, then I'll just tell

you that—that you should be ashamed of yourself. And if you hold a grudge against me for that scratch on your shoulder—which would not have amounted to anything if you had taken proper care of it—then I repeat that it was an accident. And if you remember things that I said to you in fits of more or less excusable temper, then I beg your pardon for everything impolite I ever said. Can I do more? And as your godfather, I command you to accept the position.”

Jessie knelt and clasped both of Archie's hands.

The chief began to pace the floor near the bed.

“Never begged a man's pardon before in all my life,” he muttered.

“I accept, sir,” said Archie. “Here's my hand on it.”

As the chief turned and gripped the thin hand, Jessie moved closer and kissed her lover's lips.

On the day following the sudden squall of wind on the big river, a farmer far down below Jim Samson's deserted place found an upturned canoe drifting sluggishly in a little backwater. Some days later it was identified as the canoe which Cap-

tain MacElroy had hired to take up to the Blue Bend. Old Hedley Bean had left the country; but his bones lie somewhere in the sands or mud of the big river.

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